THE COMMUNE FORM

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

KRISTIN ROSS

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INTRODUCTION

The form was simple like all great things.

—Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*[1]

When Marx, from his vantage point in London, read reports of what was occurring in the streets of Paris in the spring of 1871, there is every indication he began envisaging, for the first time in his life, what ordinary working people look like when they conduct themselves as owners of their lives rather than as wage slaves. In *The Civil War in France,* Marx duly notes the legislative achievements of the Communards. But it was the *form* their lives were taking, the art and management of their daily lives, that held his attention and that would change the path of his own research and writing in the last decade of his life. The issues he addressed in the later years, the materials he selected, and the wider intellectual, political, and geographic landscapes he mapped for himself all underwent substantial alterations due to his encounter with the commune form. Communard ideals in 1871, lofty as they might have been, did not concern him. Rather, it was Communard *practices*—the Commune's own "actual working existence," as he put it—that counted. Marx's curiosity and wonder were reserved for the discovery and implementation by ordinary people, "at long last," of *a form:* "The

political form under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor."[2]

The economic emancipation of labor, it turns out, was not an aspirational goal or a reward for good behavior. In the living, breathing shape of people leading unscripted lives based on cooperation and association, in their "impassioned collaboration"—the phrase is Fourier's—that emancipation *was already materially underway.* Workers wanted to organize their own social life according to principles of association and cooperation. They gave this desire the name "commune," echoing the slogan that had begun resounding in workers' meetings and clubs across the city at the end of the Second Empire.

The Paris Commune was a pragmatic intervention in the here and now. The commune form is first and foremost about people living differently and changing their circumstances by working within the conditions available in the present. In this sense, the form *as form* was indistinguishable from the specific people who were changing their lives, living differently, at that moment in time and in the space—the neighborhoods—in which they were doing so.

In another of his well-cited formulations, Marx writes of the Communards "smashing the State."[3] Yet, in the daily activities of the Communards, there was less smashing going on, as I see it, than there was a kind of step-by-step *dismantling.* The dismantling of any number of state hierarchies and functions was underway, and most importantly the one that makes of politics a specialized activity sequestered away for the ponderous few operating behind closed doors.

Where Marx saw in the Paris Commune of 1871 the momentous discovery of a form, Peter Kropotkin, it seems, saw rather the form's

rediscovery. Thus, one of the more interesting among Kropotkin's many meditations on the commune form occurs not in his writings on the 1871 insurrection but, rather, in the course of his long history of another French uprising—the big one, as he called it in the title of his book *La Grande Révolution*, or *The Great French Revolution.* The soul of the French Revolution of 1789, its only vigor, he writes, consisted of the sixty-some districts issuing directly from popular movements and not separating themselves from the people, the districts that made of the city of Paris a vast insurrectional Commune: "The something new which was introduced [by the French people] into the life of France was the popular Commune. Governmental centralization came later, but the Revolution began by creating the Commune."[4]

Of equal importance to the neighborhood districts of the capital, Kropotkin makes clear, were the peasant communes in the countryside. Successive peasant insurrections played the generally underestimated but decisive role in radicalizing the revolutionary process between 1789 and 1794. It was these latter forces from the countryside that demanded the abolition of feudal rights and the return of feudal lands that lords and clergy had seized from the villages from the seventeenth century onward. After all, as Kropotkin reminds us, the principal instrument of the exploitation of human labor at that time was not the factory, which barely existed, but rather land. It was toward the possession of land in common that eighteenth-century revolutionary thought was focused. (The same, I might add, could be said of our own time.) The uprising of the village communes in the countryside, he writes, "is the very essence, the foundation of the great Revolution."[5] At the same time, Paris "preferred to organize itself into a huge insurgent commune, and this commune, like a commune of the Middle Ages, took all the necessary measures of defense against the

King."[6] It was Paris as Commune that overturned the king, that became the weapon of the sansculottes against the royalty and the conspirators, and that undertook the leveling of fortunes. The Parisian districts were to hold the revolutionary initiative for nearly two years. Not only were the districts "the real center and the real power of the Revolution," but, when they died, the revolution itself ended, as a centralized government began to solidify.[7]

For both Marx and Kropotkin, revolution is indistinguishable from the direct democracy of the commune form, and that democracy is an uprising in excess of the political forms currently in place. This is what Marx meant when he referred to the Paris Commune as "a thoroughly expansive political form." The commune form, for both Marx and Kropotkin, is at once the context and content of the revolution, or, in Kropotkin's words, "the necessary setting for revolution and the means of bringing it about."[8]

The name "Commune," as such, stands in for and encompasses what Kropotkin (and most historians) understand to be the most radically democratic force at work in the French Revolution. But Kropotkin is saying something more than this. Revolution, in his view, is nothing more than the conflict between the state on the one hand and the communes on the other. The contradiction is not between the state and anarchy but between the state and another organization of political life, an alternative kind of political intelligence, a different kind of community. To the extent that the state recedes, the communes and their way of life flourish. If the role of the state is in fact to manage all aspects of societies while it dominates them and perpetuates them, then perhaps it would be better for us not to view the state form as something final, something accomplished. We may be better off seeing it as a tendency, an orientation. The same, then, would be true for the commune form: better to think it not as something accomplished but rather as a tendency, an orientation.

The observations made by Marx and Kropotkin about the commune form in French revolutionary history can help us isolate some recurrent, recognizable threads or components of the political form in question. The space-time of the commune form is anchored in the art and organization of everyday life and in a collective and individual responsibility taken for the means of subsistence. It thus necessarily entails a highly pragmatic intervention into the here and now and a commitment to working with the ingredients of the present moment. It presupposes a setting that is local, neighborhood-based, or circumscribed. The distinct spatial dimensions and temporality of the commune form unfold alongside of—or within the context of—a distant, dismantled, or dismantling state, or a state whose services have been rendered redundant by a group of people who have taken up the management of their own concerns themselves.

My goal in these brief reflections is not to provide a definition of a form that in its contingency, lack of abstraction, and ongoing, unfinished nature could hardly lend itself to such a task. The commune form, *as form*, does not lend itself to a static definition, unalterable through time; it does not unfold in the same way everywhere around the world. It is not a concept. In fact, it is inseparable from its various historical instantiations, from what Marx might have called its various "working existences," each of which engages with the particular conditions of the present, in a particular situation. And so it is to history that we must look, to the history of actual material struggles, to find such moments of alternative creations and restage, as best we can, with related initiatives and experiments in our own time, not only their own particular "working existences" but the complex echoes they entertain. These are local experiments that refuse to be defined by a localist chauvinism. Only by recreating past situations—*resituating* what are in fact site-specific battles—may we begin to perceive their

relation to other experiences elsewhere in time and elsewhere geographically.

In the last few years, dynamic territorial struggles like the ZAD (which stands for “Zone to Defend”) near the rural village of Notre-Dame-des Landes in western France, whose example figures prominently in the pages to follow, or the pipeline occupations in North America, have revived aspects of the commune form and made it their own.[9] Movements like the defense of the Weelaunee Forest in Atlanta (Stop Cop City) are creating powerful interventions into the ever-accelerating destruction of the lived environment transpiring everywhere around us. But the existence of these movements today—the very fact of them—has also had a secondary but, to my mind, no less dramatic effect, which is the one I trace in this book: they alter what is perceptible about the recent past, and especially the 1960s and ’70s. This book is, in large part, a reflection on the unscheduled workings of political memory and their effect on historical understanding. The ecological preoccupations of today awaken new echoes from the recent past that in turn alter our understanding of what counts now. Contemporary land-based struggles help us refashion a new sense of the principal lines of conflict of the second half of the twentieth century up to our own time. They change our understanding of what mattered then and what matters (or what is useful to us) now. Long-term battles fought in the 1970s by farmers and their allies in southern France and outside of Tokyo to prevent the seizure of their land for infrastructural development or the military become visible as what we can now see them to be—the defining struggles of the era.

In the light of contemporary movements, the recent theoretical landscape finds itself reconfigured as well. The 1970s anti-productivist Marxism of a thinker like Henri Lefebvre, largely ignored at the time in France (though

not in the Americas), takes on a new resonance, in large part because of Lefebvre's preoccupation with the question so central to the commune form of everyday life: its discontents and its alternatives. His and other texts from the 1970s become newly available for our use in efforts to overcome capitalist logic in the here and now through the reconquest of lived time and space.

These regional histories drawn from the recent past—as well as the anti-productivist thought of the 1970s—are, of course, very precious to occupiers of territories who are, as I write, in the process of reinventing forms of communal life in places in the countryside that have conserved a range of precapitalist usages and practices. In the second part of the book, I consider a certain number of these non-accumulative practices—defense, appropriation, composition, restitution—founded on an intimacy with the land and associated with subsistence and the figure of the *paysan*. These practices, which formed an integral part of the political intelligence of the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, are now newly manifest in an ongoing movement that issued from the ZAD and that I evoke in the conclusion of this book: Les Soulèvements de la Terre (Uprisings of the Earth). This young movement is, at this very moment, establishing a set of priorities and, in a highly public manner, going on the offensive against the seizure and plundering of land in France and beyond. Through their creativity and flexibility, through a clear designation of the enemy they share, and, above all, through repeated gestures of cooperation, the different groups and individuals who make up this movement constitute a common front. And they provide us with one of the most vivid figurations we have of the commune form in our own time.

1

NANTES, NOT NANTERRE

In the late 1960s, during a nationwide general strike in France that was itself part of political and social upheaval that spanned the globe, the particular—indeed unique—turn of events of May—June 1968 in the city of Nantes bears close examination. For Nantes was the only city in France that responded to the generalized collapse of public services during the general strike by organizing a kind of parallel administration for the purpose of satisfying the city's basic needs, which it did in alternative and highly practical ways. For this reason, the self-managed city of those few weeks of Nantes '68 is widely remembered as the "Nantes Commune."

Looking back from a half century after the events, Joseph Potiron, a *paysan* active in the struggles that put the Loire-Atlantique region at the forefront of rural insurgence throughout the 1960s and '70s, shies away from "Nantes Commune" as a descriptor of what developed in those days. "The Nantes Commune, that's saying a lot. Let's put it this way instead: in several places, spontaneously, without any instructions, paysans decided to act."[1] Potiron's assessment is contradicted, however, by no less than Jean-Emile Vié, the conservative prefect of Nantes during 1968, who regularly made use of the term "Nantes Commune" to describe the situation with

which he and other government figures were confronted in the city.[2] Years later, he continued to attest to its accuracy:

> If, everywhere in France, the interruption of the functioning of important public services had the effect of paralyzing the workings of legal authorities, it seems the case that only the Loire-Atlantique region saw a parallel administration emerge, run by those on strike.[3]

Aerospace workers in the Sud-Aviation factory outside of Nantes were the first in the country to occupy their factory; their exemplary action set off a string of such occupations in the region, then throughout France. Paysans in the region, who had long maintained networks of cooperative food distribution for their own use during hard times, began to provide food from their farms to striking workers and their families at cost, or even for free. Not only were poor families being fed, but the customary capitalist methods of food distribution, heavily mediated by middlemen, were being bypassed, their continuing necessity thus vividly brought into question. The food distribution was coordinated by a central strike committee—a kind of popular government in charge of neighborhood operations—from the end of May to the beginning of June, which helped coordinate the collective food distribution and other operations in the neighborhoods. The editors of a journal devoted to collecting direct testimonies from workers throughout France described the situation in Nantes:

> Everything began at the end of the second week of the strike (May 24) in a 95 percent working-class neighborhood, the Batignolles, where the wives of strikers who were meeting in family associations … decided to organize food distribution themselves. Walking through the neighborhoods with a loudspeaker, the strikers' wives called everyone to an informational meeting … After the meeting, a delegation of a

> hundred strikers' wives went to the closest factory to make contact with the Strike Committee.
>
> Then a food committee was created, bringing together the three workers' family associations … This committee made direct contact with the paysan syndicates from the closest village. A meeting between fifteen such syndicates and a delegation of workers and students decided to establish a permanent liaison in order to organize a network of distribution without intermediary.[4]

Initiatives undertaken by neighborhood associations reaching out to nearby farmers to find a way to manage life's everyday challenges, and the coordination of these transmissions, however ephemerally, by a strike committee occupying the town hall, could well constitute a kind of parallel administration. The new methods of managing kids, garbage, fuel, and food were enormously popular, especially in the poorer neighborhoods, where a farmers' milk cooperative distributed five hundred liters of milk a day after May 26. "The influence of these parallel circuits was so substantial that the population wanted the experiment to continue."[5] Indeed, who wouldn't? Questions of subsistence were being answered from below, and responsibility for feeding one's family was no longer being posed in terms of the individual family but, rather, framed in terms of the quartier as a whole.

Such alternative ways of managing everyday life both socially and materially, in a relative independence from the state, are often understood under the term "dual power." The term refers to the situation that arose when workers' councils in Russia competed with the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky in 1917, offering assistance and practical help on a daily basis—and the everydayness of the services is

essential—to workers and their families. The workers' networks coexisted with, and formed a kind of alternative to, the provisional government. This created an unstable and temporary situation that, from the state's perspective, had to be resolved in its favor.

More recently, the term has been taken up to refer to a conceivably longer-term practice of working alongside state structures and, in effect, substituting for the state in cases where the state has failed to respond to the general interest. Through the provision of alternative services, reliance on the state is reduced, and over time the state's structures and services are gradually rendered redundant. This process often requires unearthing forgotten skills and developing new capabilities. Even such ephemeral parallel circuits as those that emerged in Nantes in May and June required the reactivation of old capacities, such as those that characterized the neighborhood associations and the existing cooperative paysan practices in "group agriculture" that had historically helped protect the autonomy of paysan families during rough times. But they also required the invention of new collective talents and tricks, and, above all, unexpected alliances, to adapt to the unusual circumstances.

Perhaps the most fitting comparison to the 1968 Nantes Commune lies far away, but occurring at the same time, in the streets of Detroit, Oakland, and other large cities in the United States, as members of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense went about taking charge of the management of Black neighborhoods. With their school breakfasts, bakeries, and other grassroots community organizations, the Panthers, for all intents and purposes, as former Panther Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin suggests, turned their communities and neighborhoods into dual-power communes.[6] Both in Nantes and in Oakland, revolution was anchored in everyday life. Ideological purity mattered less than a transformation at the level of daily

rhythms, everyday needs and pleasures. By taking collective responsibility for meeting people's daily needs, by reclaiming the everyday by and through political struggle, they were making revolution on a scale that people could recognize.

In what follows, I will have occasion to return frequently to the question of everyday life. But for now, we need to state the limits of the Nantes/Oakland comparison. For, while the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense drew its strength from its validation and defense of Black identity and the neighborhoods where Black people lived, the strength of the Nantes movement derived instead from the coordinated alliance at its core of three distinct social groups: farmers, workers, and students. Only in Nantes did such an alliance occur. It was a form of solidarity that would continue throughout the 1970s in the development of the Paysans-Travailleurs movement, which was itself at the origin of the Confédération Paysanne's founding in 1987. It was members of this movement who also spearheaded the longest-lasting political struggle of the French postwar period—the attempt to block the construction of an international airport at its designated site in the farming area of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, outside of Nantes. This was a kind of solidarity unheard of at the time, between widely different sorts of people and contrasting ways of life, but one that would have quite enormous consequences. The contemporary challenges we confront today, especially of an ecological nature, lead me to think that the solidarities that developed in western France in those years are at least as interesting to consider, and possibly more so, as any of the solidarities that come to mind when we speak, say, about "the Global South."

The city—country alliances in the Loire-Atlantique region during the 1960s and '70s are particularly striking when we remember that in 1871, during another experimental creation of the commune form, vast distances

and what Marx called “a Chinese wall of lies” separated Parisian Communards from any comrades they may have had in other provincial French cities or from any potential comrades (or sustenance, for that matter) located in the countryside. The separation of Paris from the countryside and everything it revealed about the Versaillais’ capacity to control the representation of what was occurring in the capital, on the one hand, and the incapacity of Parisians to overcome their military isolation, on the other, was at the heart of many commentaries about the difficulties Parisian Communards confronted written during and after the insurrection by Communards like André Léo, Benoît Malon, and others. In the years following the massacre of the Communards, anarchist geographer and Commune survivor Élisée Reclus sought to rectify the way rural concerns and rural workers were systematically left out of the discourses and images of the left, most notably in his pamphlet *À mon frère le paysan* (1899). Reclus increasingly saw the division between urban and rural workers to be the most serious dilemma facing the left, a dilemma reinforced considerably by the urban left’s failure to even recognize it as a problem. The left could not perceive the way that city-dwellers occupied a privileged vantage point for analysis in its own analyses.

The active participation of a subset of Nantes farmers in May ’68, paysans who, in effect, “fed” the insurrection and kept its participants alive, created the possibility, if not the reality, of a struggle that could endure and become a way of life. In *La Conquête du pain* (*The Conquest of Bread*) (1892), Peter Kropotkin imagined what kind of duration the Paris Commune might have achieved had the regions adjacent to the city been transformed into thriving vegetable gardens. A movement’s duration plainly depends on its ability to involve itself directly in the means of subsistence. In addition to providing ready access to sustenance, doing so leads to an

increased intimacy with and knowledge of one's surroundings. The participation of paysans working in solidarity with students and striking workers made what transpired in Nantes '68 fulfill, however briefly, the outlines of Kropotkin's fantasy, as inhabitants of a city and its surrounding countryside lived daily life in the form of an insurrectional commune.

The integration of some of the paysan population into the working coalition made Nantes perhaps the most singular manifestation of the relational subjectivity often said to be at the heart of 1960s politics. In Paris, for example, such a relational subjectivity was created, in Henri Lefebvre's thinking at least, by a contingency brought on by urban planning: students attending the newly constructed campus of the University of Paris at Nanterre were forced to walk daily through Algerian bidonvilles to go to and from their subway stop. Lefebvre liked to return to this example because of its succinct illustration of his theory of spatial contradiction. It proved, to his mind, that the dialectic was alive and well and made manifest in such lived experiences of uneven development transpiring daily—and, again, this kind of frequency is essential—in any large urban setting. These were the kinds of experiences that, for him, have consequences. Economic inequality, the tangible results of the state-led modernization effort put into place after the war, produced not only contrasting landscapes and lived environments but vastly different temporalities: as the German philosopher and cultural critic Ernst Bloch so memorably put it, "Not everyone lives in the same Now."[7] Spatial and temporal unevenness was made palpable not so much by the contrast between particular entities, like a "functionalist campus" and an "immigrant shantytown," as by living and experiencing daily their jarring juxtaposition. When their daily commute to class was interrupted by the strike, new trajectories took students to organize in Algerian *foyers* (workers' hostels). The meeting of two such vastly different

worlds, with all the desires, awkwardness, preconceptions, and deceptions such ephemeral meetings occasion, were at the heart of the new political consciousness that emerged in 1968.[8]

In Nantes, where the participation of farmers made for a more concrete and fertile solidarity than in Paris, the social distances to be overcome did not, at first glance, seem so extreme. After all, the industrial workforce of the Loire-Atlantique region—aviation and shipyard workers, among others—had real roots in the countryside; many Saint-Nazaire dockers and shipbuilders, for example, had been born in the surrounding countryside, and many still lived there. They shared with paysans of the region a profound territorial attachment. And, if we are to follow the analysis put forward by militant farmer Bernard Lambert in his groundbreaking 1970 text, *Les Paysans dans la lutte des classes*, young farmers—who were reeling from the effects of the direct (and directed) influx of industrial and finance capital into French agriculture after 1965, and burdened under enormous contracts that left them with all of the financial risks and none of the benefits, a large percentage of whom already substantially indebted—were already "proletarianized." What Lambert would later call "the marriage of workers and paysans" was already underway.

But a theoretical understanding of one's proletarianized situation does not necessarily lead to an altered social life or to a transformed political landscape. In lived experience, the worlds of factory workers and dairy farmers rarely coincided. May '68 was, for many paysans, the occasion to meet up with workers, often accidentally, and often through the mediation of student and women's groups who were actively reaching out to farmers to get their support in the fight. As one farmer explains,

> Workers thought the paysans were small property-owning bosses, and paysans thought that workers were always on strike … Nobody ever got together. No one understood anyone else. I had begun to understand that the best weapon the bourgeoisie had against workers of all kinds was corporatism.[9]

The significance of the paysan intervention lay precisely in the fact that, for the first time, farmers were speaking *as farmers*, while situating the specific problems and plights of agricultural work and their region in global, political—and not merely sociological—terms. The question of access to land, its ownership, and its usage was one they could well address given the way their lives had changed with the penetration of big capital into the countryside. But the politics of land use was not just the concern of farmers. One of the central imperatives motivating paysans to join in what was transpiring, and even to take a leading role in devising actions such as the demonstration on May 24, was the desire to break out of corporatism and achieve dialogue with other kinds of people. In other words, they wanted to self-affirm as a social group with particular needs, but they wanted to do so in a non-corporatist manner, addressing the problems common to everyone at the time: the problem of the use of space, of the residues of colonialism, the way decision-making about the countryside was centralized in the capital, and the question of weapons production. In the early 1970s, the Paysans-Travailleurs organized long marches in reaction to the national farmers' union, the FNSEA, which had demanded that their march on Paris be stopped at Orleans "so that they don't stir up any shit in Paris" and, equally importantly, so that they did not come into contact with any "urban riff-raff"—that is, revolutionaries.[10] But, in several instances, those urban revolutionaries, in the form of Maoist students seeking "stages" or apprenticeships as paysans, were already coming to meet and spend time with them. Beginning in the summer of 1968, Maoist students from Paris and other large cities began their "long marches" to the countryside, and

many to Brittany, where, as one of the paysans who lodged them in his barn and got to know them recalled, “Maoists came with the idea that to get anywhere, we had to work together. This coincided with our own thinking in the region, where people were trying to fight together.”[11]

Well before 1968, in fact, a new agricultural left was making its presence felt in the Loire-Atlantique region. The 1940s and ’50s saw the high point of the Jeunesse Agricole Catholique (JAC), for example, a movement defending the interests of paysans. “It’s the capitalist system based on profit-making that must be changed,” wrote Bernard Lambert in an article entitled “Will the Machine Triumph over Man?” published in *Jeunes Forces Rurales*, the widely circulated journal of the JAC. “[The capitalist system] prevents each man, regardless of his birth or his fortune, from taking his place in society based on his manual and intellectual faculties.”[12] From the early 1960s onward, regional farmers were at the forefront of paysan insurgence against the ever-increasing capitalist and state strictures on their way of life. They sought a form of regional autonomy, and this meant breaking with nationally led unions. Referring to the new disruptive practices underway outside of the surveillance and jurisdiction of the national unions, Lambert later remarked in an interview, “We had lost the habit of asking our spiritual fathers in Paris what we should think about the actions we were taking.”[13] The bid for something like regional autonomy resounded in the slogan behind which some one hundred thousand people, mostly farmers (thirty thousand in Nantes) marched in villages throughout the west in the event on May 8 that marked the beginning of May ’68 in Nantes: “L’Ouest veut vivre” (The West wants to live). It was precisely their isolation, their separation from the decision-making centers of the capital and from national power, that would increasingly become a positive factor in their experimentation with different forms of coexisting and

managing their affairs together. It was farmers who initiated the big demonstration of May 24, driving their tractors into the center of the city and rebaptizing the central square the “Place du people.” This was the beginning of the Nantes Commune.

Many farmers experienced May ’68 less as a distinct “event” than as one moment among many in the long regional continuity of struggle that preceded it and followed it. In this sense Lambert’s *Les Paysans dans la lutte des classes* really did represent what its preface proclaimed: “Condensed into the writing of a single individual is the thought of an entire milieu of workers at war with the domination of capitalism.”[14] As a political and social document, we might well compare it to the *testimonio* genre popularized in Latin America in the 1970s. *Les Paysans* was the first work to place farmers and workers in the same structural situation vis-à-vis capitalist modernity. It called for liberating the provinces from the tyranny of decisions made for them by bureaucrats in faraway Paris—a real regional power, in other words, and a full decolonization of the countryside. Lambert, in the short span of life allowed him, lived the transition from a rural world centered around *chateau* and *curé* to the new mechanized farms of agribusiness; when he died in 1984, people were only just beginning to call into question agricultural productivism. As early as 1957, Lambert could be heard addressing Breton farmers, advising them to “remain free workers in farms that operate on a human scale.”[15] In *Les Paysans,* it is the young modernized farmers who concern him, those who had “bought into,” quite literally, the state discourse on modernization, who believed in the promises, took out the loans, renounced polyculture and adopted specialized practices, bought the new equipment and the industrial fertilizers, and, maybe, expanded their holdings, and then who rapidly discovered that all the newly accessible technological progress failed to bring the promised

improvements. At the same time, they were being relentlessly pushed to higher and higher levels of competition and indebtedness. For Lambert, these proletarianized farmers, mere tributaries of industry, had become integrated into the economy, but in a dominated, exploited position. And as such, they were a distinctly new revolutionary subject.

I have suggested elsewhere that *Les Paysans dans la lutte des classes* bears comparison with canonical revolutionary texts of the era, like Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) and Simone de Beauvoir's *La Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*), and not just because of its wide distribution when it was published.[16] (The book sold over one hundred thousand copies and was quickly translated into German, Italian, and Portuguese.) Like the other two works, Lambert's book gives voice to a genuinely new political subjectivity figured in its title. A new subjectivization emerges in the pages of Lambert's book to accompany that of women or the colonized in the form of the paysan: defender of the earth. By working with and designing the landscape, by knowing a particular milieu intimately, and especially by knowing how to go about using it without abusing it, it is the paysan who makes *le pays.* Today, *paysan* remains the chosen term among many young farmers, reclaimed from being a term of denigration and given a new value, while the term *agriculteur* is viewed as reducing the worker of the land to the ranks of every other producer of commodities. Where the modern agriculteur preys on the living, reduces its diversity, and is a major force in ecological deterioration, the paysan makes a contribution to the living world.

In the book I wrote many years ago about the debates surrounding May '68 and its afterlives, I lapsed briefly and uncharacteristically into prophecy and predicted, in passing, that the day would come when an autodidact farmer like Lambert would eclipse someone like student leader Daniel

Cohn-Bendit as a figuration of the politics of May ’68; and that events that transpired in Nantes, when paysans joined the struggle with workers and students, would reverberate more forcefully in the contemporary political imagination than do the events that unfolded in the Latin Quarter.[17] (It was the late 1990s, I was finishing the book, and I had undoubtedly been reading about the assault on the McDonalds in Millau, the razing of the genetically modified field, or one of the other early Confédération Paysanne actions.) By the time of the fiftieth anniversary of May ’68 in 2018, it was indeed clear that the day I predicted had arrived. Jacques Willemont, who, as a young film student in June 1968, had made his way to the industrial outskirts of Paris as the general strike was coming to a painful end, and managed to capture the most moving and essential film images of the era (*La Reprise du Travail aux usines Wonder*), made another quite astounding movie called *L’autre mai, Nantes mai 68.* In the documentary footage Willemont assembled, we can hear the aged conservative former prefect of Nantes whom I cited earlier, Jean-Emile Vié, describe the workings of the Nantes Commune; we can watch the ancient-looking tractors crawl into the Place Royale in the city center on May 24, and students hang the new sign over the central monument (“Non au régime capitaliste, Oui à la revolution complète de la société”); we can listen to Marie-Paule Lambert, Bernard’s widow, and other farmers talk about the food distribution networks.

The screening of Willemont’s film constituted a bright light indeed in the deadly ritual of the commemoration of May ’68. It was aired, only once, I think, on France 3, to not too many viewers. In Paris, the commemoration was under full swing, and Cohn-Bendit had agreed to serve as a kind of master of ceremonies for President Emmanuel Macron’s wish to engineer and preside over an official Elysée celebration of May ’68, scheduled to last all year long. This peculiar idea in fact never materialized, perhaps in part

because, unlike Cohn-Bendit, so few of the other people invited to the gala were eager to accept an invitation to party with the state. Like all state-sponsored commemorations, this one would do nothing more than summon forth the past in order to consecrate the present. But “May ’68” and its accompanying images were once more in the streets, everywhere, it seemed, adorning kiosks and magazine covers, the book jackets of freshly published or re-edited memoirs and histories, and posters for university symposia and film series. While the images momentarily caught the eye, they did not seem to generate in passersby any political thoughts or stir any long-lost remembrances. The fact of the commemoration itself, the way in which its peculiar temporality framed the images and saturated the city space, seemed to drain references to ’68 of any compelling interest whatsoever.

The only exception to the lack of attention occurred early in 2018. Only once did some aspect of the 1960s grab hold of people’s memory and imagination and enter vividly into the figurability of the moment with any degree of political necessity. This occurred in January when, suddenly, the press was full of discussions of the Larzac—the long battle by sheep farmers in the Aveyron to hold on to grazing lands under threat of becoming an army training ground. Suddenly, once again, summer evenings spent in festive solidarity with farmers and sheep on the Larzac Plateau were available for recall by those old enough to have made the trek south to show their support for the farmers’ cause—a relatively large number of people, given the thousands who made the journey over the ten-year battle. In fact, the Larzac was the first time that such a vast number of French people felt it necessary to displace themselves and travel, often great distances, for a political cause.

The sudden reappearance of a struggle that had been resolved—successfully for the farmers—some forty years earlier had nothing to do with the canned rituals of a commemoration. Its visibility had nothing to do with chronology. The Larzac broke through the commemorative fog and became newly perceptible only because of an event that took place that same month, in January 2018: the victory at Notre-Dame-des-Landes. On January 17, the longest-lasting ongoing battle in postwar French history, and one that had begun, like the Larzac, in the late 1960s and early ’70s, came to an end. Occupiers of a few hundred acres of agricultural land outside Nantes who had sought to block the construction of an international airport won a decisive victory. The airport would not be built.

The battle at Notre-Dame-des-Landes had begun when farmers refused to sell their land, some four thousand acres that had been designated by the government as the site for the future airport. During the final ten years of the movement, farmers were joined by an assortment of squatters, naturalists, young farmers from the region, and others: a full-fledged occupation was from that point on underway, designed to prevent the onset of construction. As word of the occupation grew, thousands of supporters began periodic visits to the “ZAD” (Zone to Defend), as it came to be known; coming from as far away as Mexico and Japan, they joined in communal meals, sowing and harvesting, helping to build dwellings and communal structures, defending the wildlife as well as, in the end, the autonomous, semi-secessionary, collective way of life that had developed there, especially after 2012.

With its announcement on January 18, 2018, that the airport would not be built, the Macron government had, in the end, collapsed in the face of relentless opposition. And it was in the brief euphoric weeks after the announcement of the victory that the Larzac reemerged in memory and in

the media as a possible model for what could happen next in the unscheduled history of the ZAD. Could not the collective farming that had become a way of life at the ZAD—where "historic" farmers shared their knowledge with newcomers in a series of fruitful collaborations—be allowed to continue in some form, with the land continuing to be farmed by ZAD occupiers and the Larzac serving as a possible model? Suddenly, the status of the Larzac in the history of the recent past was altered. No longer was it seen as an afterthought of the long 1960s, or as the last gasp of countercultural energies. The Larzac found itself fulfilled anew in the present, prolonged, in a sense, in the form of the communal experiments at the ZAD. The ZAD's victory made the Larzac and its struggle perceptible again, and suddenly the fault lines of the last half-century were reconfigured.

We can measure the extent of that reconfiguration by making a simple observation. The ZAD brought the Larzac back into people's minds, rather than, for example, the other long struggle of the 1970s in France with which the Larzac at the time was frequently paired, even "twinned": that of Lip factory workers in Besançon, who began a very long strike in 1973. The most emblematic of factory occupations and long-term experiments in autogestion, the Lip movement in effect "flanked" the Larzac; the cause of the (mostly women) watchmakers who occupied their workplace in an attempt to save their jobs was taken up and embraced by the left throughout the country, just as it embraced the sheep farmers' bid to hold onto their land. Speaking high atop the Larzac Plateau in August 1973 to a crowd of almost one hundred thousand people that included two hundred Lip workers who had voyaged across the country in a show of solidarity, Bernard Lambert called for the "marriage of workers and paysans, the marriage of Lip and the Larzac."[18] Lambert's call resonates with the thinking and

practice of the Paysans-Travailleurs movement he was then leading, members of whom had conducted the tractor convoy into the center of Nantes in May 1968, who had marched with Lambert from Brittany to support the sheep farmers of the Aveyron, and who would be among the paysans to refuse to sell their land in Notre-Damesdes-Landes to accommodate the needs of international commerce. It was that same international (or internationalizing) commerce, of course, that had provoked the strike at the Lip factory, where the factory owner had intended to sack a significant number of workers whose jobs were being sent to Mexico. Lambert's wedding wish shows the way in which Lip and the Larzac were thought together at the time, in one breath, as high-stakes political battles of exceptionally long duration, and as a coterminous and related demand for autogestion and autonomy.

If anything, given the long history of urban representations of the entrenched conservatism of paysans, their isolation and putative incapability of organizing politically, and their continual failure to forge solidarity not only with factory workers but even among themselves, it would seem that it was the paysans who would have stood to gain the most from such a marriage. They would be "marrying up." Farmers, after all, were retrograde, clinging desperately to old, outmoded ways, while city factory workers inhabited squarely their modern historical era. As central components to the development and workings of capitalism, factory workers were, in fact, its muscular personification. Paysans, on the other hand, according to everyone from Vladimir Lenin to the most fervent capitalist modernizer, were vestigial elements destined to be swept away in the fullness of time. They were relics to be overhauled or replaced. One such fervent modernizer, then Minister of Defense Michel Debré, gave full-throated voice to the stereotype when he explained why the government had

chosen the Larzac Plateau in the first place as the site for its army training grounds. The plateau was, in his words, inhabited by “a few farmers, not many, who are vaguely raising a few sheep while living more or less in the Middle Ages.”[19] Why, then, in 2018 was it the striking watchmakers of Besançon who were fading back into history, as though becoming lost to some definitive past, while the farmers of the Larzac could appear to incarnate the future?

For it was true that, from the vantage point of 2018, Lip could now be perceived as figuring the finale of a particular political sequence, one that had begun in earnest as a mass practice during the general strike of 1936, and that was taken up seriously again in 1968 at Sud Aviation and other factories: the occupation of factories on strike. Historically, the practice of factory occupation served several goals: it was, first and foremost, the proof of the force and gravity of a strike, since it indicated the will to clearly differentiate itself from other, more artificial actions, like meetings or petitions, as well as from partial, “symbolic” strikes that bore the mark of syndicates and unions and that no longer mobilized workers. A factory occupation was clearly different from marching in the street for a salary augmentation, as it proclaimed the will to have mastery over one’s own workplace—its rhythms and its spatial organization. As such, an occupation affirmed the principle that the factory and its equipment belonged to those who knew how to use them. Factory occupation frequently constituted a significant economic blow against owner and management as well, either through work stoppage or through workers’ appropriation of the fruits of their own labor. (Striking Lip workers brought the watches they had made to sell when they visited the Larzac.) And it also involved a complete transformation of the interior space of the factory, as workers in effect replaced the Stakhanovite rhythms of the assembly line with the

unpredictability and sociality of everyday life, reconfiguring and opening up the factory space into a place to make dinners, care for children, study, have discussions, or make art.[20] Lip represented the last gasp of factory occupation, of organizing at the site of the factory—perhaps even the beginning of the end of political organizing around salaried labor more generally as a principle of solidarity. The word "multinational," as philosopher Grégoire Chamayou reminds us, entered the vocabulary in France right around the same time Lip workers went on strike—the word was unknown in the 1960s, and as it became commonly used, the long process of outsourcing factory labor to the other side of the world proceeded accordingly.[21] The internationalization of commerce decentered the French worker subject, making him or her quite literally no longer "at the center." Certainly, the *sujet ouvrier francais* could no longer incarnate, or be expected to incarnate, the one and only social group destined to create communism.

But it is one thing to acknowledge the progressive decentering of the French factory worker in the last fifty years and quite another to posit the paysan or rurality as figuring the future. To do so requires quite a major shift of perspective regarding the anachronistic situation of the paysan inside capitalist modernization, and particularly after World War II. Literary scholar Erag Ramizi's study of the figure of the *paysannerie* in early twentieth-century European fiction shows clearly how the sheer persistence of peasant activity and a distinct peasant economy based largely, if not entirely, in subsistence—working the land and reproducing the farm, the people, and the creatures within it in a non-accumulative way—creates an incongruity with urban capitalism that is not explained by spatial distance from the urban centers of power alone.[22] Family-based agricultural producers who are predominantly, if not exclusively, engaged in a

subsistence economy are *temporally* incongruous as well, both in the quotidian rhythms of their daily life and in their historic dimension. Their rootedness in the soil is itself an indication that their concerns reside, in significant ways, in the past and thus conflict or clash with the concerns of the capitalist present: growth, progress, accumulation, movement, speed, and fungibility. In that sense, paysans are, for Ramizi, ongoing examples of what cultural theorist Raymond Williams called "residual" forces: "effectively formed in the past, but … still active in the cultural process."[23] They are, in effect, human remnants—they come bearing the signature of past times, but a past that survives in the present. The oft-remarked-upon "conservatism" or traditionalism of paysans is sometimes nothing more than the unbending determination required of them to defend and preserve the survival of their basic unit of both production and consumption: the family farm. It is, for them, a question of staying with what is old and works. From the vantage point of the city, their exclusion from the dominant modernizing process makes them appear outmoded, even "atavistic oddities"—the phrase is Ramizi's—their sporadic uprisings and dissatisfactions the sign of an unending conservatism and unwillingness to let go of old ways. Lambert, who was on the front lines of an attempt to translate between the two very different points of view of metropole and countryside, was highly aware of the entrenched nature of the stereotypes at play. Often, it seems, he found himself confronted by the difficult but absolutely indispensable task of "giving an accurate political interpretation to actions that often risked appearing to be Poujadist-type revolts."[24] In fact, this crucial work of political education was, for Lambert, at the heart of the political program of the radical paysannerie. For from the point of view of the urban left, not much had changed since the days when Elisée

Reclus wrote his pamphlet *À mon frère le paysan.* Paysan discontent could only appear in the distance and be understood as incipient Poujadism.

But what if we were to instead adopt, in place of the view from the city, what sociologists Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen call "the subsistence perspective"?[25] The subsistence perspective is not an abstract theoretical model; it is a perspective generated from within a different conception of "economy"—one that is both older and younger than capitalism, and one that makes life and the maintenance of the living its central principle.[26] The subsistence perspective constitutes an orientation distinctly different from that required for commodity production, since it involves working out how—and how much—we want to produce and consume, and organizing collectively toward that end.

The subsistence perspective offers a way of envisaging and practicing a different economy and creating other kinds of social relations. It transforms the exclusion of the paysannerie from the dominant workings of modernization into a new way forward. It makes the fact of their not being completely subordinated to market relations into an opening, a potentiality, a regeneration. It makes of "subsistence" a synonym not for scarcity but for abundance. "The residual," after all, can, as Williams reminds us, retain "an alternative and even oppositional relation to the dominant culture."[27] Simply by clashing with the present and the concerns of the present, the outmodedness of the residual can meta-morphosize into the "emergent." By embodying "a fissure, a rupture, a clash," the anachronic, in Ramizi's words, can become a "harbinger of the new."[28]

In Ramizi's analysis, the transformation occurs when paysans are not merely inert figures of anachronism (Marx's "sacks of potatoes") but when they become instead *actively*, even *impudently* anachronistic, when they use

their conflict with the present to become, like the Larzac farmers, active flies in the ointment, or sand in the gears of army tanks.[29] They transform the situation whenever they stand in the way or refuse to allow their own quite distinct temporal rhythms to be determined or subsumed by the uniform labor time of the modern capitalist economy. After all, individual profit and competition are foreign to the subsistence economy and to peasant culture generally. Elements of practical communism and organic solidarity are known to persist in Indigenous agriculture and peasant practices. The small, autonomous grower maintains productivity by conforming both to tradition and to the natural conditions such as he or she found them. The principle of production in the peasant economy is that of satisfying the immediate needs of the family and thus developing and preserving the family's autonomy. As a repository of use values, as well as of knowledge of the land and its usages, the paysan is a source of memory and history. (Exchange, on the other hand, has no history.) Capitalist agriculture, whose only perspective is valuation and profit, dissolves the age-old practices of regenerative peasant farming and completely reorganizes the process of production, its material and technological conditions, as well as its temporality.

The agricultural world is particularly well placed to understand when the economic objective a society pursues is condemned by the very way it goes about pursuing it. Because of its concrete properties and material conditions, agrarian life is necessarily the basis of any alternative economy, any alternative society. To the extent that paysans remain shielded from the vicissitudes and pressures of the capitalist market, they may well be less forces of counter-revolution or the repositories of some national essence than they are the bearers of an alternative set of practices and know-how—perhaps even the guardians of an economy based on reciprocity and the

exchange of use values. The people that Marx called “the class that represents barbarism within civilization” might well figure the potential for a new political future.[30]

For Bernard Lambert, the turning point had indeed been reached, embodied in the transformation that the Paysans-Travailleurs from the west and the farmers of the Larzac were bringing to fruition in the 1970s. “Never again,” he declared in his address to the crowds on the Larzac Plateau in the summer of 1973. “Never again will paysans be on the side of the Versaillais … We’ve proven it.” Never again would paysans serve as the instruments of repression of the commune. They would, instead, figure its persistence, its regeneration.

2

A TALE OF THREE AIRPORTS

Fifty years later, the ZAD's victory in Notre-Dame-des-Landes would bring new force and audibility to Bernard Lambert's already impassioned speech by reviving the sheep farmers' war with the state and recasting it as a drama of utter relevance to the present. In other words, it is only the existence of the ZAD in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, and other similar occupations in our political landscape, that make the genealogy I am tracing (or a figure like Lambert) perceptible to us today. And, with the Larzac now fully back in view, new light is cast on other contemporaneous land-related battles. In the late 1960s, Japanese farmers in the Chiba Prefecture outside of Tokyo made clear their intention to prevent their land from becoming what is now the Narita International Airport. The government's choice of the site on the Kanto Plain, at more than thirty-five miles from the center of Tokyo, was to prove calamitous. The country was then led by the so-called iron triangle: an alliance between the public administration, the big industrial groups gathered in the Keidranren, and the conservative politicians of the Liberal Democratic Party (a party that was neither liberal nor democratic).[1] Having made the poor choice of Narita as the site, in part because land belonging to the imperial family at Narita could be appropriated and used for the project,

the powerful minister of transport went further by demanding that the farmers in the region cede their land as well to make room for the five runways envisioned in the grandiose plans. Local resistance to what the paysans called the construction of a “gateway to emptiness” was organized beginning in 1966, and a decade of murderous battles between the state and farmers who refused to give up their lands, supported nimbly by the far-left Zengakuren (the national student union), had begun.[2] It was these well-nigh Homeric battles, immortalized in the films of Shinsuke Ogawa and Breton documentarist Yann Le Masson, that, according to the testimony of many French militants of the era, inspired their own frontal and physical clashes with the police in the streets of Paris and other French cities in 1968.[3] Sanrizuka, as the struggle came to be known, had become a world at least partly outside the jurisdiction of the state.

The most violent altercations occurred in September 1971, when three police officers were killed in a battle with thousands fighting on each side. Although Narita was slated to open that year, the first airplane only landed in 1978, on the single runway that had been built (and remained so until 2002). Logistically, Narita, at a cost of tens of billions of dollars, was a failure—closed at night, too far from Tokyo, too expensive for many airline companies, and only accessible from autoroutes with bumper-to-bumper traffic.

Around the same time that Japanese peasants began to fight the expropriation of their land, the French government designated a corner of farmland outside of Nantes as the site for a new international airport. Justifications for, and sponsors of, the airport changed frequently over the many years that followed. But the project’s origins during the peak years of the so-called *trente glorieuses* (“thirty glorious years”) of postwar development bears witness to the magical thinking (“build it and they will

come") of businessmen clambering to make their mark in the regional competition for more tourists and more commercial opportunities. Various justifications for a new airport were advanced over the years and abandoned: at one point, it was to be the departure and landing point for the short-lived Concorde supersonic airliner, to relieve Paris of noise pollution. Later, it was billed as joining Orly and Roissy—a kind of third sibling in the family of airports of greater Paris. Studies that attempted to give a greater scientific veneer to the project cost more than the price of the land needed to build it—land that government officials regularly described as "almost a desert." The "desert" description could only be the echo of the familiar colonialist trope mobilized, as we have seen, by Michel Debré regarding the paysans of the Larzac, indicating a perceived scarcity of population preceding invasion. For the area chosen for the airport was no desert; it was in fact largely, and ironically, wetlands—a category virtually unknown or unrecognized in the 1970s. And it was populated by working farmers.

So it was that the area of some four thousand acres, containing several dozen farms, was decreed in 1974 to be the site for the future airport; in bureaucratic parlance it was now a "ZAD": a "zone d'aménagement differé," a zone of deferred development. But the deferral stretched across several decades, as the state attempted to "wait out" the farmers who had not sold their land, until they came to their senses and changed their minds —or, in a more likely scenarios, until they retired or died, and their children were more easily persuaded to abandon their land. At one point, throughout the l980s and '90s, the state seemed to have forgotten its intention to build an airport, only to reawaken from its nap in the early 2000s, reinvigorated and ready to begin construction. In the meantime, however, the zone profited enormously from the state's forgetfulness. I once likened the

situation to the island of Cuba during the so-called Special Period, when the country was too poor to buy the chemical fertilizers once supplied by the Soviets. Like Cuba, the zone had been transformed into a protected agricultural zone, a bocage with all its hedges, forests, and variegated fields intact, diversified and complex.

The rest of the nearby countryside, like much of French agricultural land, particularly in Brittany during the 1980s and ’90s, had suffered the fate of *remembrement:* a kind of rural “redistricting” designed to facilitate vast, flat monoculture cultivation. Areas that were once worked as small, varied holdings geared to subsistence were reengineered to be rid of any natural obstructions like hedges or trees, in order to clear the way for large-scale farm machinery. Ripping up hedges and dousing fields with chemicals brings higher yields and cheaper food, but it comes with an elevated price: the depletion of the land. Even in the nineteenth century, Marx was well aware that what passed for “progress” in the countryside was what also caused the degradation of the soil:

> All progress in capitalist agriculture is not only progress in the looting of the worker, but also the art of looting the soil, all progress in the growth of fertility on the short term is at the same time a progress in ruining the durable sources of that fertility of the land.[4]

“Remembrement” makes monoculture an implacable obligation through the imposition of its techniques and technologies. And the more that cultivated ecosystems are simplified and flattened into gigantic horizontal surfaces, the more the mechanisms used to work them become technologically complex and dehumanized.[5] By changing the surface appearance of the land at the same time as its usage, remembrement erases the bodily memory of the region as well. All this, ironically, was the fate that Notre-Dame-des-Landes in fact *avoided* by being designated the site of the future airport.

Developers were hesitant to build near a future airport, and no one wanted to live next door to one—in addition to avoiding remembrement, the suburbanization that was befalling much of the area surrounding Nantes was held at bay in Notre-Dame-des-Landes. The medieval landscape of the bocage became a kind of feudal remnant or tesseract, a wrinkle in time preserved in the present.

At the same time that the Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport was being sketched out on the planning boards, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Canadian government, in anticipation of the 1976 Winter Olympics, decided to build outside Montreal what briefly became the world's largest-ever airport by surface area. The project involved the most extensive land expropriation in Canadian history, with the government seizing ninety-seven thousand acres across sixteen towns, villages, and parishes. Seventy-five percent of the land seized was agricultural, much of it of very high quality; forests and multigenerational farms were razed, and entire communities and villages demolished.

As in France, the high-volume developmentalist rhetoric of the waning years of the postwar boom was mobilized to create acquiescence, if not enthusiasm, for the airport project. And unlike in Japan, organized opposition to the expropriation on the part of the Quebecois farmers was slow to grow. For several years, some three hundred farm families refused to sell. One farmer threatened with eviction remarked:

> This is my family's land. I was born here, and I was raised here and the farm has been mine for twenty-one years. I know this land and I know what it can do and that has taken me a long time to learn.[6]

But the vast majority of farmers accepted the government's offers, which were later shown to be well below market value for the land. By March

1969, some twelve thousand people had lost their land.

With the farmers successfully out of the picture and their land expropriated, the Mirabel International Airport was indeed built, opening in October 1975. But it was built, it seems, just a little too far away from the city, and like Narita, it was a logistical failure. Passengers preferred to use the existing airport closer to town and avoided the new one, which, regularly referred to as a "white elephant," had to be subsequently repurposed to move freight and cargo only. But even that did not prove profitable. For many years, the airport's only real use was as a film set. The terminal was demolished, at great expense, beginning in 2014.

Many years later, when the government tried to lure farmers back to the region, it met with little success. Economic geographer Eric Gagnon Poulin observes:

> Between 1972 and 1985, the expropriated and evicted farmers often did not have enough money to relocate onto similar land. Most of the time, they had to buy a smaller parcel or no land at all. Some of them went to the surrounding urban areas and left agriculture for good … Priority was given to the former residents for reacquisition, but the ones who had left to the cities did not all come back, so some families decided to take advantage of the opportunity to buy the land of their former neighbors, which paved the way for industrial farming in the region.[7]

In the wake of the massive dispossession it caused, the catastrophic Mirabel interlude had the effect of helping transform a region of sustenance farming into vast single-owner agro-industrial parcels. Even without the airport, "the Mirabel vision" ended up serving the intensive aerian world to come.

What these three examples—from Europe, Asia, and the Americas—make clear is that from the 1960s on, the airport, or rather the international airport, had emerged as the leading symbol throughout the world of what are now called pharaonic, state-imposed infrastructural projects. These are

megaprojects built on debt and contracted in the name of the public in order to finance private profit; invariably, they are characterized by significant cost overruns and widespread inefficiencies during construction. And, invariably, they wreak enormous destruction on the natural and material environment where they are located. To give just one example, consider what it took to render the Quebecois farmland receptive to jet landings: the first runway alone necessitated over 7 million cubic feet of concrete, 680 million pounds of gravel, 1.4 billion pounds of sand, and 85 million pounds of hot-mix asphalt.[8] Of the three airports, Narita alone remains standing—a monument to the bureaucratic obstinacy at the root of all three projects. One of the most peculiar aspects of these particular airport-development projects was their redundancy: in all three cases, a fully functioning international airport already existed nearby: in Montreal, in Nantes, and in Tokyo. Narita, it was hoped, would project a broader international image for Japan than did Haneda; and Mirabel, as we have seen, was designed in view of the ’76 Olympic Games as well as to embody what then president Trudeau modestly called “a project for the twenty-first century.” Mirabel’s boosters, who all tended to be from Ottawa and not Québec, were convinced that the airport would change French-speaking Canada’s “backward” image and make more people outside Canada “associate Montreal and its residents with being modern and global.”[9] Additionally, it would serve to discipline a rebellious province, which had disputed the size and location of the airport, and prove to Quebec that the federal government was in charge. As for the airport outside of Nantes, in the late 1960s and ’70s, when the project was dreamed up, Nantes businessmen decided that the industrial destiny of their region was one that would soon make Germans and Japanese tremble: all that was needed to create the next “aerian Rotterdam of Europe” was to move the city’s existing airport to an area twelve miles away.[10]

That the response to a burgeoning international trade competition and the beginning of a slowdown to the postwar economic boom should take the form of expropriating land worked by cultivating farmers in order to build new international airports in Asia, Europe, and the Americas demonstrates powerfully how ubiquitous the logic of the "airworld" and the international commerce that fuels it had become.[11] There was now in place a worldwide agreement that the global trade in luxury items—the rapid air transport of Dutch tulips, iPhones, and caviar, along with the vast majority of high-cost products—was the force powering economic growth. There was consensus among governments that economic growth was what in fact now, and in the final determining instance, matters. An additional benefit offered by international airports was (and remains) the way they pull double duty by purveying luxury goods: in their capacity as extensions of "mall culture," they act as prime display space, showcasing useless high-end merchandise in airless boutiques to bored passengers increasingly trapped by the need to spend hours in security lines and awaiting flights.

To move people and goods around the world as effortlessly as possible requires a friction-free world. The airworld is a place in which the value of any item of earthly life is reckoned according to its service to capital. People and things must be detached from any lived entanglements, any impediments to their movement, to become mobile investments in a world where the fungibility of space—unlike time—is taken as a given.

Frictionlessness of the degree conducive to the airworld and its logic requires the integration of all technologies into the same system—a kind of integral modernization of everyday life. By the 1970s in the Global North, a fully administered, interconnected space-time of this kind had been to all extents and purposes achieved. And one of the main measurements for the achievement of such a level of capitalist modernization in the Global North

was the elimination of the paysannerie and other cumbersome “remainders of the past,” along with their different economy and rhythm of life, from the national population.

The tale of three airports also allows us to argue that, from the long 1960s onward, the real battle between workers and capital may not have been occurring in the cities, in disputes over the wage demands of unions and salaried labor, the problem of unemployment, or the level of surplus value generation. A more consequential battle, as sociologists Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen suggest throughout *The Subsistence Perspective*, may well have been occurring in the form of the war against the paysannerie all over the world, the continuing primitive accumulation or land grab that deprives people not only of land—though land, in the end, is what many now would say matters most—but dispossesses them, as well, of their means of production and their ability to provide for themselves: their autonomy. Land and the way it is worked is the most important factor in an alternative ecological society. Capital’s real war is against subsistence, because subsistence means a qualitatively different economy; it means people actually living differently, according to a different concept of what constitutes wealth and what constitutes deprivation. It is oriented toward the intrinsic value and interest of small producers, artisans, and paysans. It involves the gradual creation of a fabric of lived solidarities and a social life built through exchanges of services, informal cooperatives, cooperation, and association. It seeks to expand the spheres of activity in which economic rationality does not prevail. It means a life that is not molded and shaped by the world market, a life lived on the outskirts of the world organized by state and finance. These are the outlines of the commune form.

Mies and Thomsen remind us that in places like Europe, the turn to an accumulative economy on a massive scale in the countryside took place only quite recently—it transpired for the most part during the 1960s and ’70s. This is an important point to make, in their view, because it means that the subsistence perspective connects organically with a time and a history that many of us can still very much recall, if not have in our personal experience. In this light, the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des Landes was not a voluntaristic exercise created out of whole cloth by anarchist activists. Rather, the political intelligence of the ZAD lay in its ability to connect with the long rebellious history and the desires of paysan insurgency in the area, just as it revived the living memory of the Larzac struggle and the other land-based battles of recent memory. The possibility of living differently was all the more imaginable because some people could remember a time when life actually *was* lived differently. “Another world is possible,” was one of the slogans from the Larzac, the movement Bernard Lambert predicted would become “the land and terrain laboratory of France.”[12] Another world is possible because another world *was* possible—even quite recently.

In an earlier essay, I made the point that the ZAD’s existence, along with the other land-based struggles of today, alters what is perceptible about the recent past, and especially the way we visualize the 1960s and ’70s.[13] A contemporary occupation like Standing Rock in 2016–17, in which an Indigenous-led coalition of activists resisted the emplacement of petrocapitalist infrastructure on tribal ancestral lands, transforms and reconfigures what is visible about those not-so-distant times and gives new names to what we can now see and recall. The ecological preoccupations of today awaken echoes from the recent past that in turn give rise to a new understanding of what finally counts in History—what it is that really

matters to us now. Thanks to the form that ecological battles and occupations have chosen to take in our own time, the Larzac and Narita's Sanrizuka can now be seen to be among the most defining combats of the worldwide 1960s.[14]

We can now perceive the 1960s and '70s as the moment when the contradiction between the logic of development and the logic of the living began to be felt by people all over the world as the primary contradiction defining their lives. We might speak of it as a moment of awakening, or perhaps rather a reawakening, of a communal unconscious. From that point on, any subsequent battles against social inequality would have to be joined in steadfast and creative ways to the need to safeguard the living and conserve the conditions for life on the planet. There could be no politics except an ecological politics; no decision could ever be made again without taking into account the very conditions necessary for maintaining life: the composition of the atmosphere, the quality and quantity of arable land, the availability of water, the level of pollution. Movements like Les Soulèvements de la Terre (Uprisings of the Earth) or Stop Cop City reorient the horizon of political struggle toward the protection and conservation of the living. And the form taken by these movements makes visible a new political grasp on the everyday and a way of managing common affairs. And with all this came a new, or rather a new/old way of organizing, founded on the notion of territory as a praxis produced by space-based relations—or, the commune form.

3

DEFENSE, APPROPRIATION, COMPOSITION, RESTITUTION

Defense

What are the practices that such diverse movements as the Paris Commune of 1871, the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, and the Sanrizuka struggle in Japan share, above and beyond their use of occupation as a form of direct action? The first and most important such practice is the act of defending per se, embodied, as we have seen, in the figure of the *paysan*, whose name, etymologically, bears the trace of the notion of defending the territory. The notion of defense is prominent as well in a word, or rather an acronym, that is now remarkably familiar to most French people, considering that it only entered the dictionary a few years ago—namely, ZAD, or "Zone à Defendre" (Zone to Defend).[1] In the series of documentaries Ogawa made about Sanrizuka, we can watch Japanese paysans following the lead of North Vietnamese peasants in their war with the United States, burying themselves in underground tunnels to prevent the entry of large-scale construction machinery into the zone. Testimony from those active in Sanrizuka indicates a war between two worlds: on the one side, the

Japanese state, in the throes of a postwar capitalist modernization effort that, like so many other states in the 1960s and ’70s, made industrialization the supreme, perhaps the only, national value; on the other, farmers defending what they took to be values essential to *life itself*, at risk of being destroyed if the airport were built. Shima, a paysan active in the struggle, described the conflict in these terms:

> We paysans will lose our place of refuge … Is this the occasion for the development of a glorious Japan, or will countless thousands of people and households be buried under the soil by the state’s authority? This is not just about political opposition to the airport because of a disagreement about what to do about industry and agriculture. Only *our* lives, the lives of paysans, the lives of cultivators dedicated to cultivating the land are being buried under the runways and the dust.[2]

Japanese farmers assumed the responsibility of speaking for the coherence and integrity of the ancient village (*kyodo tai*) and the collective, communal body of its inhabitants. They evoked the long tradition of peasant uprisings from the late eighteenth century into the Meiji period, situating their own struggle within a history of defending against the encroachment or diminishment of their way of life. Drawing as well on the particularity of their region, an area marked for centuries by strong nativist traditions and the autonomy of its villages and hamlets, a paysan called Sannomiya singles out the defensive nature of the role embraced by the *paysannerie:*

> Though we have been agricultural cultivators since antiquity, I believe that what is central for us is the protection or care of agricultural lands. In the ancient village we took constant care of the land and I believe this is worth fighting for. Cultivation is also important. Isn’t this a reason for us to fight together? Our history in the ancient village has made this fight different for us.[3]

Here, the daily and seasonal act of cultivating and nourishing the village inhabitants is distinguished from a more general and distinctive role as

protector or steward of agricultural land and its future use. Since the times of the ancient villages, the paysans' historic cultivation of the land has conferred upon them both the honor and responsibility of its care, custodianship, and defense.

In Notre-Dame-des-Landes, the centrality of defense to the movement only really came into being when the farmers who refused to sell their land to the government were joined by townspeople and a new group after 2009: squatters and soon-to-be occupiers. With the arrival of the first squatters, the defensive nature of the occupation began to take shape, confirmed by the movement's hijacking and *détournement* of the government's acronym. The ZAD (*zone d'aménagement différé* in bureaucracy-speak) became a ZAD (Zone à Defendre), and the acronym was imbued with a new, combative meaning. For the opponents of the airport construction, the simple changing of the name had at least two important consequences. The word "ZAD," with its new meaning, gave the occupation and the people making it a subject name that was different from any identifiable part of the community. The collective subject formed through collective action now had a unifying name, one that was distinct from that given by the bureaucracy, and one that extended to all the occupiers, to the flora and fauna of the zone, and to the territory they were creating. Second, the administrative perimeter of the zone now designated a set of porous battle lines, and the act of defending had taken center stage.

I have argued in other writings on the ZAD that *defense* and *the act of defending* are more conducive to the creation of solidarity than the political action we are frequently called upon to perform: namely, *resistance*.[4] Resistance, I suggested, means the battle is already over and we have lost; our sole means of persevering is to "resist" the newly consolidated power we attribute to the other side. Resistance responds to the hope of getting by

when the enemy, it seems, holds all the cards. Defense, on the other hand, begins elsewhere—not with the state and its power, but rather with what it is that we hold dear: what we already have, a positivity, a thing worth fighting for. And, in fighting together for it or in defending it, a more powerful solidarity is woven than can be created through resistance. The commune form, as at once a political movement and a shared territory, a tactic and a community-in-the-making, is actually nothing more than an attempt to gain ground in the historic fight against enclosure. Indeed it does so literally, by *gaining ground:* defending some place, even if it is nothing more than the impoverished neighborhoods deemed valuable and worthy of defense by the Black Panther Party *for Self-Defense* (best to always call them by their full name), in cities like Oakland and Detroit during the 1960s; or the bleak traffic circles transformed into places of conviviality by the "gilets jaunes" at the edge of town; or the semi-arable farmland of Notre-Dame-des-Landes. The city the Paris Communards defended with their lives in 1871 was one exhausted by months of siege and deprivation. The sheep farmers of the Larzac spent ten years defending, as Michel Debré seemed to suggest, nothing more than a desolate limestone plateau and an archaic way of life.

Resistance, quite simply, means letting the state set the agenda. Defense, on the other hand, is grounded in a temporality and a set of priorities generated by the local community in the making.

The act of designating a zone to be defended derives its considerable political power from the way it brings into being a kind of "transvaluation of values": the measurement being used to determine the zone's value is neither that of the market nor, necessarily, that of the state's agenda. It has nothing to do with a demand for fairer distribution. The designation as *worth defending* of something that, in the existing hierarchy of value,

previously had little or no value calls into question the very criteria we use for measuring or experiencing prosperity; it is a revaluation of what counts as wealth, what well-being looks and feels like. It recasts what truly counts for the community in the making—what it is willing to defend.[5]

And the nature of what it is that is being defended, of course, changes over time, particularly in the long struggles the Maoists used to call "protracted wars": occupations like Notre-Dame-des-Landes and Sanrizuka. In Ogawa's filming of the "Mamas' Brigades" during Sanrizuka, we now see the children of early opponents to the airport themselves implicated in the struggle. Occupations that endure so long require of the occupants a ceaseless ingenuity to come up with new and creative ways of *inhabiting* the conflict. Fighting about a place is not the same as fighting for an idea. Place-specific struggles create a political situation that calls for a clear-cut existential choice—one is either for the airport "and its world," as the slogan goes, or against it; and if one is against it, one changes one's life accordingly. Marxist geographer David Harvey has made the useful observation that place-specific battles generate what he calls an "either/or" dialectic (as distinct from the Hegelian thesis/antithesis/synthesis): farmland is either farmland or it has become something else—a mall, or an army training ground.[6] The Weelaunee Forest outside Atlanta will continue to be a forest, or it will become a militarized training ground for police. In his letters to Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich about another rural battle between the commune form and the state, Marx says much the same thing: "It is a question no longer of a problem to be solved, but simply of an enemy to be beaten … It is no longer a theoretical problem … it is quite simply an enemy to be beaten."[7]

Yet even struggles of shorter duration than Sanrizuka come to entail defending the collective way of life that has taken shape during the defense.

One may begin by defending a forest or some unpolluted land. But, as the occupation endures, all the new social ties, the lived entanglements, the solidarities the struggle produced become just as important, as does a deepened intimacy with the land—what the philosopher Gaston Bachelard called the "muscular consciousness" of it—an intimacy nourished by the seasonal rhythms of agricultural work as much as by the relationship to the terrain that develops during skirmishes with the forces of order. The very notion of a territory, in all its particularity, helps create an environment that, in Raymond Williams's words, can be "received and made and remade," actively molded and achieved through work, play, and battle—in a word, as I will discuss below, *appropriated*.[8] The territory stands in direct contrast to those spaces constructed without any relation to the local community or milieu—spaces that we travel through or consume mindlessly and that conserve little or no trace of our existential engagements. At the heart of the lived relationship with the territory lies a form of embeddedness that some of the occupants of the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes describe as the breakdown, in daily life, of any distinction between dwelling in a place and defending it. But, despite certain media representations to the contrary, in no sense of the word does that embeddedness take the form of an enclave closed in upon itself. The territory, in fact, creates in the dweller an experiential standpoint from which to perceive and engage all the better with the wider world, by providing a mode of apprehension, an orientation, and a center of political gravity based on active engagement in the labor, practices, and material details of conducting affairs collectively at the daily level—whether it be cultivating the land, caring for animals and children, building a meeting place, or assembling a library. Defending the territory in a protracted war comes to entail defending the very collective life project

that has taken shape there during its defense. We make our community by defending it.

Appropriation

What struck me most about my first visits to the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes was less the landscape or its inhabitants than the peculiar way in which time unfolded there. I was invited to the ZAD in early 2016 because of a book I had published the year before about the political culture of the Paris Commune, *Communal Luxury.* At this point in the occupiers' history —a moment of prolonged renewal and experimentation a few years after a violent government assault in 2012—some of them were looking consciously for models that might help them sustain a life intentionally set adrift from the world organized by state and finance. Some had turned to the Zapatista struggle, in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, for practical ideas, while others had gone back in time, and especially to the Paris Commune as a kind of "usable archive." Some at the ZAD had been inspired by the notion of communal luxury extolled by artisans during the Commune and by the central role Communards gave to aesthetics and pleasure in social transformation. They had organized a kind of teach-in weekend on the Commune that I had not been able to attend. Instead, I found myself there a month later, with a task to perform during my visit: I was to give a talk and lead a discussion about the continuities and discontinuities to be drawn between the experience of the Parisian insurgents in 1871 and what was then unfolding among the occupiers at Notre-Dame-des-Landes. We were going to try to compare what happened in nineteenth-century Paris to "the paysan question" today.

Before my visit, I knew very little about the ZAD. Mass media at the time was still full of representations of its inhabitants that looked as though they had been lifted from the *Mad Max* trilogy. I knew enough ("swampy," I had heard, "this time of year") to bring rubber boots along with my toothbrush and thick sweater. I also had my notes on the topic of discussion. My book was still fresh in my mind, but notes for me were necessary—a kind of psychological crutch more than anything—when speaking in French to a group.

Though academic labor is by no means the most disciplined or rigid of activities, it tends to follow a certain protocol or set of customs, to which one becomes habituated. The speaker is picked up at the station, taken to where she will spend the night, left alone to gather her thoughts, then follows the speech, discussion, drinks, dinner, and bed. My primary hostess, a young woman called Uma with an astonishing smile who greeted me at the Nantes train station, had herself only just arrived on the platform, managing to meet me, against all odds, on time, after hitchhiking and bus-riding many hours all the way from the Susa Valley in Italy, where a large collective of inhabitants was attempting to block construction of a high-speed train line between Turin and Lyon. We sat down at the café across from the train station, lingering there, drinking coffee, and taking our time becoming acquainted—it seems, in part, because the guy who had the keys to the car had been held up in a police blockade outside the station. We were also waiting to give a ride to others arriving from Paris, who had gone there to join in the street protests that spring against the reform of the labor laws.

At the cabin at Saint-Jean-du-Tertre on the ZAD, I met other members of the Mauvaise Troupe Collective, a group of young occupiers who had written a book-length *enquête* of sorts, interweaving their own movement

with that of the Italians Uma had been visiting—a book I would later translate.[9] Uma and another young woman took me for a walking tour of that part of the zone. We visited an assortment of cabins and installations of various sizes and in differing states of repair—some tiny and tucked away, others half built, most encircled by caravans and vegetable gardens. They pointed out to me the area where the weekly "nonmarket" took place. The cinematic associations conjured up in my mind by the terrain and its inhabitants were less *Mad Max* than something along the lines of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* or *Deadwood.* A Wild West construction in process, with all the bustle and mess and joy of collective building, the palpable sense of a world—physical dwellings as much as a space of collective social transformation and experimentation—coming into being. I asked Uma's friend what her least favorite task was at the ZAD. I expected to hear the equivalent of "latrine duty"—a vital procedure, given the lack of a sewer system there. But instead, the woman (whose name I had not caught) designated "participation in the Cycle of the Twelve" to be the worst. "The Cycle of the Twelve," she explained, was the device the ZAD had come up with to deal with contentious disputes or antisocial behavior in the community. The Twelve formed a panel of mediators whose names, once a month, were drawn out of a hat containing those of everyone in the different households. The Twelve acted as a kind of revolving advisory committee, with no real authority beyond the capacity to listen to both sides of an altercation or conflict—many of them involving dogs—and to devise possible solutions to the dispute or determine some sort of recompense to the aggrieved. To serve on the committee must have meant confronting all the intractable disputes and settling of scores that arise when people with dissimilar political codes live together. In addition, one would have to then try to fashion, collaboratively, a local solution to the problem without

recourse to law books or timeless moral codes, and without undermining the solidarity in diversity that was keeping the ZAD going. I could see her point. Latrine duty would be much less taxing!

There seemed to be no hurry to get to the talk. In fact, a more pressing task soon presented itself in the form of a herd of cows that needed to be led from one side of the ZAD to a field across the way. We set off with the cows, who were docile and easily led; we talked among ourselves about the Larzac along the way, stopping to converse with people we passed by, some of whom decided to come along as well. Along the way, a woman in a neighboring encampment, who had a small herd of wild horses she was "breaking in," needed help moving some of these to different pastures, and that was another story—the horses broke free and had to be recaptured, with great difficulty, deep in the forest to which they had fled. So it was not until early evening that we made our way back and people began arranging benches in a circle in a sunny clearing for the discussion to begin. Had the horses made us late, or was it always the idea to begin our talks at that moment—when the bread from the ovens next door, made daily from the brown buckwheat flour ground in the old mills of which I had taken a photo earlier, had just finished baking and could be passed, warm and fresh, around the circle of participants? (Old and young, many of them were women, including occupants and friends from Rennes.) It was impossible to know, but between the bench and the bread and the blinding sunlight, written notes were too difficult to consult: the discussion was soon well underway, and in the end I did not need them.

At the ZAD, the "working day" tended to expand or contract according to the tasks at hand, whether these be preparing food to take to striking postal workers in Nantes, repairing a tractor, writing a leaflet, or organizing the library books. This temporal elasticity became clear to me especially

when subsequent visits coincided with the seasonal equinox or solstice, when big collective efforts involving planting or harvesting were underway. Because the bocage at Notre-Dame-des-Landes is in fact composed largely of wetlands, much of the regenerative farming methods, tools, and their implementation appear as though held over from the nineteenth century. Large-scale heavy machinery would sink into the mud (as the military tanks Macron sent into the zone in March 2018 in fact did). Joining in the haying meant availing myself of a three-pronged pitchfork with amazingly narrow and delicate curved tines. It also meant learning, in a way that I never quite mastered, the intricate two-person synchronized ballet step one took with one's partner after spearing the bale in unison, then pivoting together to fling it to the top of the enormous tower of bales aboard a slowly moving cart towed by a small tractor—which was driven by a very tanned young woman with another astonishing smile. The stronger among us could lift a bale by themselves; others, like me, worked in pairs. Balancing like goats on the top of the bales, Jojo or Christian would haul the flung bales into an arrangement that would keep them all from toppling over as the cart made its slow way across the field. Haying could go on well into the night; in fact, it was cooler to continue the work after sunset, with crepes and wine to consume outside, beginning around 10:00 p.m.

I am aware that making an example out of haying runs the risk of veering dangerously close to the genre of pastoral. In fact, the different way that time moved at the ZAD could, I think, be only partially attributed to the seasonal rhythms of rural life, agricultural labor, and the beauty of the bocage. The particular kind of intense and psychically satisfying fatigue I experienced after a stay at the ZAD had more to do with the social density and intensity brought on by the intermingling of labor and social interaction, especially for someone like me, used to spending much of my

time by myself. (It was also, of course, a mode of experience entirely foreign to the rhythms of salaried labor.) For me, Notre-Dame-des-Landes was a kind of oasis of human and nonhuman actuality, a place where haste was looked upon as a failure of tact, and tasks disclosed themselves in a succession according to a logic of what was in fact genuine need. Cows must be milked, sheep must be attended to and guarded from predators, bread must be baked though mealtimes, and the times of many other activities need not be precise. Collaborative effort to solve pragmatic problems involved a flow of improvisations, exchanges of savoir-faires, consultations, and interruptions—though the question of what, in fact, constitutes an interruption at the ZAD would require an essay in and of itself.

Henri Lefebvre might have characterized the temporality of the ZAD as "appropriated," in the strong and very particular sense he gave to the term. "Appropriated time" has its own characteristics:

> Normal or exceptional, it is a time that forgets time, during which time doesn't count and is no longer counted. It happens, sometimes unexpectedly, when an activity brings fulfillment, whether that activity be banal (a task, an occupation) or subtle (meditation, contemplation), spontaneous (a child's game or even an adult's) or sophisticated. The activity is suited to itself and to the world.[10]

Time can be sold, but it can also be lived. The experience of "appropriated time" brings with it, in retrospect, the knowledge and acute awareness of its opposite: the recognition that not only does the state agenda and the capitalist market organize social life; it actively *confiscates* the organization of social life and dispossesses us of the chance to arrange it in our own way and at our own pace.

“Appropriation” emerged early on as an essential part of Lefebvre’s rethinking of alienation. But throughout his long career, he continually recoded his thinking about the process to address the different contexts preoccupying him at given moments, whether these be urban space, the critique of everyday life, or ecology. His elaboration of the process of appropriation was in large part what allowed Lefebvre to break with Marxist productivism, to theorize political sites outside of the workplace, and to make his mark, along with André Gorz, Ivan Illich, Murray Bookchin, Maria Mies, and others, as a major force in the anti-productivist, ecologically attuned theory that flourished in the 1970s. Lefebvre writes:

> The ideology of growth is dead in the water: before, we held on optimistically to the belief in indefinite production and productivity: ever more automobiles, more television sets, more washing machines and calculators. With the same optimism, we thought that economic growth would bring us, sooner or later, the satisfaction of all of our needs: material and “spiritual,” as we say … we believed—still with the same ideology—in the favorable character of giant companies and enterprises, in the beneficent character of demographic and technological growth. This vast ideological construction is slowly, but surely, crumbling. Why? Because of urban unease, the destruction of nature and its resources, because of blockages of all sorts that paralyze social development, even when they enable economic growth … Growth for growth’s sake, from now on, that’s over.[11]

Readers unfamiliar with Lefebvre may find it surprising that he made these remarks (in a speech delivered in Santiago, Chile) as early as 1972. But the 1970s were the moment when virtually all human communities found themselves integrated within a globalized system of state-capitalist control in exchange, it seems, for the promise of a new level of security. The ending of the so-called Fordist compromise and the waning of the reign of Keynesian accommodation in the 1970s transpired more or less clandestinely; the results were not fully registered or given a name until the following decade, when people began to speak about something called

“neoliberalism.” Already, though, as Lefebvre’s remarks suggest, the effects and repercussions of that expanded cycle of capitalist expropriation were being felt at the level of everyday life, the “level” of human existence to which Lefebvre had turned his attention for some time. The period between the unleashing of emancipatory energies in ’68, on the one hand, and the gathering forces of the counterrevolution palpable already by the mid-1970s, on the other, saw a reawakening of something like a communal unconscious. Large-scale and long-lasting spatial battles like the Larzac or Sanrizuka acted like the canary in the coal mine, alerting those paying attention at the time to the shift, in the countryside, to an accumulative economy that was occurring on a massive scale. At the same time, in the wake of 1968, in France and elsewhere, a marked flight from the large cities took place, mostly among young people intent on continuing the existential and social restructuring the ’68 insurrections had nourished at the level of everyday life in the form of communal-living experiments—for the most part in corners of the countryside where land was cheap. Some of these experiments were ephemeral; others, like Longo Maï or Ambiance Bois (near Limoges), were long lasting.[12] But the marked shift of perspective to that of the countryside—or, to paraphrase Lefebvre, what we might call “the right to the countryside”—in those days gives credence to the idea that while ’68 was a movement that began, for the most part, in the cities, its intelligence and future tended toward the earth/ Earth (earth in the sense of the soil and the Earth as a planet).

Lefebvre is best remembered now for his work on urbanism, but his earliest studies took the form of rural sociology, and throughout his life he maintained an abiding attachment to the mountain region of his childhood in the Pyrenees. “Instead of writing a thesis in philosophy on a philosophical problem, I wrote a history of the *paysannerie* of the

Pyrenees."[13] That history—his doctoral dissertation—recounted the dissolution of rural communities under the impact of capitalism: the progressive deterioration of "the ancient organization with its delicate balances between populations, resources, surfaces," and "the dissolving of the ancient community."[14] What sociologist and philosopher Michael Löwy has called Lefebvre's "radical romanticism" has its roots in Lefebvre's conviction of the existence of a "certain human fulfillment"[15] (the same "fulfillment," we saw earlier, of "appropriated time"), a "whole way of life," in the rhythms of long-gone peasant communities in the French countryside—the whole cycle of plantings and harvests and the great agrarian festivals.[16] Like William Morris before him, Lefebvre's critique of the modern world was made in the name of precapitalist, premodern societies—in the name, perhaps, of "the uproarious peasant laugh." It was that eruption of spontaneous, joyful laughter, so distant, in his view, from the contemporary city dweller's ironic and weary smile, that drew him to write a book about Rabelais.[17] In an extraordinary chapter of the first volume of the *Critique de la vie quotidienne (Critique of Everyday Life)*, Lefebvre evokes the human fulfillment of the medieval past: "In peasant celebrations, each member of the community went beyond himself, so to speak, and in one fell swoop drew all that was energetic, pleasurable and possible from nature, food, social life and his own body and mind." The peasant celebration was not an exceptional moment in an otherwise-drab existence; it was nothing more (and nothing less) than the intensification of the plenitude, the fulfillment of everyday life itself: "Festival differed from everyday life only in the explosion of forces which had been slowly accumulated in and via everyday life itself."[18]

Lefebvre found a theoretical rendering of such a "human fulfillment" in Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. There, in a few

elliptical passages, Marx introduces the figure of non-alienated man —"total" or whole man. The figure of the "total man" and the lost peasant communities of the French countryside were two of the three ingredients Lefebvre used to formulate the political project of reconquest and dis-alienation that became the path he pursued, and that he called, after Marx, "appropriation." The third ingredient, of course, were the Communards of 1871.

In Marx's youthful writings, appropriation appears as the sensuous realization of self in the natural world. Through social practice, man appropriates nature, but he also appropriates his own essence. Theorist Bertell Ollman gives us a useful example of what this might mean. "To 'capture' a sunset … it is not necessary to paint, write or sing about it. It becomes ours in the experiencing of it."[19] Our pleasure in the experience is the indication of appropriation. For Marx, however, any *real* appropriation, "the real appropriation of the human essence by and for men," can only be communist appropriation.[20] Man "appropriates his comprehensive essence in a comprehensive manner, that is to say, as a whole man" only by way of communist social relations and the end of private property. "Communism, as the positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being." Total man, which is to say, pre- or postcapitalist man, is a fully social, fully sensuous being: "Man in the entire richness of his being … profoundly endowed with all the senses."[21] Under capitalism, beset by the alienation such an economic system produces, man is not total but rather truncated, partial, maimed. Under capitalism, appropriation is reduced to mere property interactions and relations—the one-sided hodgepodge gratification of possessing and having.

Lefebvre, we might say, “appropriated” the notion of appropriation from Marx and made it his own. To do so, he had to confront the fact that Marx had not charted the transition the “total man” would take from his former, alienated self to the totality in which he becomes himself, total. Improbably, Lefebvre comments, “Alienation would end completely and in one fell swoop.”[22] Liberated from nature by society and from society by nature, the new society would simply allow the individual to suddenly achieve unity—instantaneously, it seems—with the totality. The notion of “total man,” with its implied relation to nature and the natural world, was something Lefebvre could well put to use, but the process of dis-alienation had to be narrated differently, more materially and more historically; it needed to be seen as a process, a set of practices, rather than as a speculation about human essence:

> The idea of total man sheds any utopianism by entering into the real, more slowly, and with much more difficulty than we could have imagined, because modern society is incomparatively more complex and more problematic than the world of the nineteenth century.[23]

Alienation, for Marx in the nineteenth century, was the result of purely economic causes: man’s activities and social relations are transformed into things by and through commodity production. For Lefebvre, what was required to save and appropriate the notion of “total man” was to trace the historical mutation in the new *forms* of alienation that had emerged, especially after World War II, as domination and alienation began to appear more and more under guises that were not strictly economic.

This, of course, became the work of the three volume *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, along with the spatial recoding of that critique he pursued in the later books on urbanism and *La Production de l’espace* (*The Production*

of Space). But even before the war, as historian Michel Trebitsch suggests, Lefebvre had come to understand alienation more generally, as a kind of deep disempowerment experienced in all domains of life, "an inability in all areas of life to grasp or think the other."[24] Alienation was less the loss of some human essence than it was the loss of possibilities: the sense of blockages and impasses brought on by the destruction and fragmentation of the social tissue by capitalism. This sense of blockage is what Lefebvre expressed with the capsule phrase he shared with the Situationists: "The colonization of everyday life." The capitalist economic system not only creates alienation; it also limits our ability to recognize forms of alienation other than the strictly economic. It creates a world where economism invades all aspects of thought and life, a world where economic reasoning dominates all other kinds of reasoning. And it presents itself as the only possible world. Alienation, for Lefebvre, prevents us from seeing the ways in which we are dispossessed of our dignity, our social life, our time, the sense of mastery over our lives, the beauty and health of our lived environment, and of the very possibility of working together to invent our future collectively.

Everyday life as the terrain of ever-changing alienations also holds the key to their collective dismantling. A colonized everyday life could be decolonized—not in one fell swoop, perhaps, but through a concerted effort of reappropriation of lived time and space.[25] Lefebvre's powerful intuition was that the way in which space is organized is perhaps the largest variable in the appearance of other ways of producing—that is, alternative usages outside of the logic of ownership. As early as the mid-1960s, Lefebvre had begun to understand space as something that was not transcendent to action but was instead the very object of collective practice: "Space," as he put it years later, "is becoming the principal stake of goal-directed actions and

struggles."[26] One such directed struggle, of course, was the Paris Commune of 1871. In Lefebvre's pathbreaking 1965 account of the insurrection, *La Proclamation de la Commune* (*The Proclamation of the Commune*), Communards reappropriate the center of the city from which they had been excluded by the urban modernizations undertaken by Baron Haussman. Ordinary people are seen modifying the space of the city to serve their own needs and possibilities, and, in so doing, giving the lie to the Leninist argument that the Commune's "failure" revealed the ironclad necessity, for social transformation, of strong vanguard parties. Not only did Lefebvre's book throw a wrench into the prevailing Marxist interpretations; it also gave him a model of sorts, a dynamic conception of everyday life, by which to understand the reconquest of lived time and space.[27] Since any social transformation exerts a creative capacity on everyday life, appropriation cannot be understood apart from its temporal rhythms. Groups or classes of people cannot be perceived as new; that is, as figuring social change, except to the extent that they "produce" a space. Groups and individuals cannot constitute themselves as actors and subjects unless they generate a space—at once physical and social—that they appropriate and control themselves.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre draws a broad distinction between "dominated space" ("invariably the realization of a master's project") and its opposite, "appropriated space." Dominated space is space that has fulfilled the economic wish to create an interchangeability between places. Like farmland that has undergone the process of *remembrement*, dominated space has been rendered hostile to human use:

> The more space is functionalized—the more completely it falls under the sway of those "agents" that have manipulated it so as to render it unifunctional—the less susceptible it becomes to appropriation. Why? Because in this way it is removed from the sphere of *lived* time, from the time of its "users," which is a diverse and complex time … It is the political

> use of space, however, that does the most to reinstate use value; it does this in terms of resources, spatial situations, and strategies.[28]

Social transformation is inseparable from the idea of producing a *usable* space: "An elaborated social space, complex and fulfilling, in a word *appropriated*, and not merely *dominated* by technology and political power."[29] The irony has perhaps not been sufficiently appreciated that such a major text of anti-productivist theory as *La Production de l'espace* should be to such a large degree a manifesto for "production": "appropriated space" must be "produced." There is a means of production, and there is a product. The process of appropriation involves a kind of *poesis*, in the broad sense of the term, a making that affirms the central role of the aesthetic in social transformation. After all, the highest expression of appropriative activity, it seems, for Lefebvre, is the work of art. The model for unalienated production is artistic creation, and, by extension, all production must be pleasurable and artistic—the result of effective participation in the creative construction of a space. Appropriated spaces, like the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, "resemble but do not imitate" a work of art. "The vast shanty towns of Latin America … these districts sometimes so effectively order their space—houses, walls, public spaces—as to elicit a nervous admiration. *Appropriation* of a remarkably high order is to be found here."[30]

The favela as an example of appropriated space shows that the commune form flourishes best in the interstices of capitalist logic, in its misfirings and its margins, in the places it has forgotten or disregards, or during moments, even years—in the case of Notre-Dame-des-Landes—when the state is napping. It also illustrates how social change derives less from the extension of control over one's work life than from the metamorphosis of work or expansion of nonwork life by rejecting the ethic of accumulation.

Following Marx, Lefebvre drew a distinction between societies characterized by accumulation and those that are non-accumulative. Precapitalist economic formations, like the Russian peasant commune form—the *obschina* that preoccupied Marx in the years following the Paris Commune—though they often produced a surplus, were geared to simple reproduction and were thus primarily non-accumulative. They were also integrated into natural, cyclical rhythms and tended toward a static equilibrium. Under capitalism, as an accumulative society, the economic sphere becomes predominant and determinative. Lefebvre extended the distinction between accumulative and non-accumulative societies to a distinction between accumulative and non-accumulative *processes.* The struggle over everyday life could then be perceived as the struggle to make non-accumulative processes—desires and drives that are not reducible to economic imperatives, such as spontaneity, art, sensuality—prevail. In spaces independent of the driving force of accumulation, time moves differently, untethered from state or economic imperatives. The commune form itself can be understood as a set of non-accumulative processes. A non-accumulative process like "usage," for example, particularly usage of the land held in common, stands in sharp conflict with exchange because it implies appropriation and not property. "Inhabiting," or "occupying," can be another such process. Thinking of our lives from the point of view of where we live, inhabiting a place and becoming inhabited by it, particularly now, in the light of the destruction of the lived environment, is one answer to the question of how to develop a point of view, a perspective, an orientation that is *not* that of the economy.[31]

Like Marx, Lefebvre makes it very clear that the relationship of appropriation to the space-time it creates is not one of ownership; appropriation is part and parcel of the positive *abolition* of private property:

> It is not at all about property; it's actually about something quite different. It has to do with the process by which an individual or a group appropriates for itself something exterior to it and transforms it into their own, in such a way that we might speak about an urban space and time appropriated by the group that fashioned the city.[32]

Appropriation implies "usage," rather than ownership; something like a "right to usage" in conjunction with a right to making, or poesis in the broad sense of immanent social creativity, a making and a usage that ignores the legal and spatial division of mine and yours.

Appropriated spaces here and there, as experimental forms of "social property," can, by avoiding ownership, constitute examples. Each time and place that a particular appropriation is implemented, it may attain the status of an example, changing our ideas about what is possible by giving us practical illustrations of what can thrive if economic rationality is not the mode of reasoning that prevails. A world organized for trade and profit need not be the only world. In this way each instantiation provides for us the act of self-emancipation made visible. But the asymptotic horizon of transformation remains the suppression of private property of the land. Lefebvre saw no adequate formula for going about such a suppression other than the kind of inroads against proprietary ideology made by practices of appropriation. State control he found disastrous since it transfers property rights to the state. Municipalization—*pace* Murray Bookchin—presented the same problems and inconveniences on a different scale. The only answer, in his view, was something like what we used to call political education: the slow creation not so much of a shared belief but rather of a common perception. What was needed was the gradual socialization of people as a whole, inspired by the examples of appropriated spaces or communes, toward a change in their orientation. The commune form, then, as a space where labor time has ceased to be the dominant social time and

the time of cooperation fills the void, would constitute one way of developing such an orientation, a point of view that is not that of the economy. A qualitative social development would be achieved through the expansion of systems of value—social, aesthetic, ecological—that are independent of market logic, since any kind of "sharing" or "pooled resources" disrupts the smooth flow of market free play and efficiency.[33] Something like communism is created against the grain of capitalism, alongside it and not after it—not, that is, in any kind of continuity with its definition of the world: as one of giganticism, centrality, and abstraction.

Composition

At once a mobilization and a territory shared in common, the commune form is a political movement that is also the collective elaboration of a desired way of life—the means becoming the end. As such, it is perhaps the only rational medium for people to recognize and organize their own forces as social forces: in Marx's words, "a resumption by the people for the people of its own social life."[34]

As a form, it is both specific, that is, recognizable, and infinitely transmutable; it transforms itself easily to thrive in different times and places. What Kropotkin said of anarchist society might well be said of the commune form: "It is not crystallized into a certain unchangeable form, but will continually modify its aspect."[35] And what that modified aspect might look like can only be ascertained in the act of its being realized, since the commune must be formed or composed—it must take shape, it must be built. Always situated in a particular place, a territory, a neighborhood, a forest, a specific milieu, the commune form is about "producing" space, as Lefebvre put it: building spaces and places in the most literal, pragmatic

sense of the term, and attending to their daily workings. "'Change life!' 'Transform society!' These precepts mean nothing if there is not the production of an appropriated space."[36]

This pragmatic, daily attention to collectively managing common concerns is what the word "commune," it seems, in its earliest historical usages, most consistently evoked. Medieval historian Charles Petit-Dutaillis writes, "In short, the word *commune* evokes above all the idea not of a free government but of a group that has formed itself to manage collective interests." In his study of the usages of the word during the Middle Ages, Petit-Dutaillis discovered that "more or less directly, but almost constantly, the word refers to the efforts of a collectivity to better protect its moral and material interests."[37] The sense of a collective management or administration of everyday life is reinforced, he maintains, by the etymology of the word. Disputing recent etymologies that trace the meaning of the word to a juridical connotation (the commune as the set of laws governing a community), Petit-Dutaillis shows the derivation of the word from the Latin *communio*, signifying simply "association." In everyday usage during the twelfth century, he maintains, the word "commune" signified a union of people sharing interests in common, an association.

Petit-Dutaillis's championing of an administrative sense of the word over a governmental one finds a forceful echo in the writings of Parisian communard Jules Andrieu. In charge of communal administration of the city of Paris during the Commune of 1871, Andrieu took care of the everyday management of the workings of the city and the material survival of its people. For Andrieu, the most "satanic" aspect of then president Adolphe Thiers's battle plan was the sudden cessation of public services and the effect that such an abrupt set of stoppages would have on daily life in the city. In a mere day or two, chaos would reign: corpses lying unburied

in the cemeteries, public fountains dried up, waste piling up in the streets, sewers overflowing. As Andrieu saw it, the Commune's project was to distinguish at all times between the municipal level and the national level; the idea was to administer Paris and the everyday needs of its inhabitants and avoid anything that seemed to partake of the national government: "The idea at the origin of the March 18th movement … [was] that the Paris Commune renounced governing France."[38] Andrieu saw his role to be that of immersing himself in the most basic dimensions of the city's workings—from food distribution to sewage, from lighting and water access to cemetery management—and ignoring, for the most part, the verbal pyrotechnics and perhaps high-rhetorical grandstanding going on among some of his colleagues across the city in the Hotel de Ville. The Commune was not something that could be proclaimed; it had to be built from the ground up. "The commune," he subsequently wrote, "needed administrators; it was crawling with governors."[39] "Governors," for Andrieu, were those who passed decrees without taking responsibility for their execution, who postured in view of the future instead of speaking in and to the present moment: "It's old-fashioned, it's theatrical, it's Jacobin." Administrators, on the other hand, were those who responded every day to daily necessities, and who took responsibility for meeting those needs as best they could: "During a revolution,"Andrieu proclaimed, "I believe that everything that is not useful is harmful."[40]

So, if the commune form is less about governing than it is about meeting common concerns, then the form implies an ongoing commitment precisely *not* to establish relationships and institutions in a definitive, hidebound form but to build with a continuing supple openness to collective improvisation and to creative and practical confrontations with the situation immediately at hand. We might think it as an open project, one that orients us and moves

us toward a horizon beyond capitalism and beyond state bureaucracy. The transmutability of the form has everything to do with the particular people who make each commune, and who, in so doing, outline a way of life, a subsistence in accordance with the commune's site, its location, and its location's history. Equally importantly, they devise a way of life in accordance with what the people making the commune decide their own political emancipation will look like. Each commune is built in a way particular to its specific space—to its subjects, its geography, to the history of its conflicts and achievements, its attributes and its challenges, as well as the challenges to come.

But who are those actors, those subjects "producing" a physical space they appropriate for themselves? At the end of *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre muses, again in a very prescient way, about one of the main characteristics of spatial battles:

> There should therefore be no cause for surprise when a space-related issue spurs collaboration … between very different kinds of people, between those who "react"—reactionaries, in a traditional political parlance—and "liberals" or "radicals," progressives, "advanced" democrats, and even revolutionaries. Such coalitions around some particular counter-project or counter-plan, promoting a counter-space in opposition to the one embodied in the strategies of power, occur all over the world, as easily in Boston, New York or Toronto as in English or Japanese cities. Typically the first group—the "reactors"—oppose a particular project in order to protect their own privileged space, their gardens and parks, their nature, their greenery, sometimes their comfortable old homes—or sometimes, just as likely, their familiar shacks. The second group—the "liberals" or "radicals"—will meanwhile oppose the same project on the grounds that it represents a seizure of the space concerned by capitalism in a general sense, or by specific financial interests, or by a particular developer. The ambiguity of such concepts as that of ecology, for example … facilitates the formation of the most unlikely alliances … the diversity of the coalitions just mentioned explains the suspicious attitude of the traditional political parties towards the issues of space.[41]

In the early 1970s, when Lefebvre was writing, it was already apparent to him that the ecological, land-based struggles to come would spur, as he puts it, "collaboration" and "unlikely"—even "*the most unlikely*"—"alliances." What he is pointing to is a situational unity (an impassioned collaboration) that is neither ideological nor identitarian. Though he locates the creation of "counter-spaces" in urban settings in the passage just cited, Lefebvre might well have been writing the future history of the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, noting what was, along with defense, perhaps its most salient characteristic. This is what I called earlier its construction of solidarity in extreme diversity. When the historic farmers sought to defend their land and way of life by not selling out to the government in the 1970s, they were initially successful, but thanks mostly to the government's own inertia or its strategy of simply waiting them out. The state then more or less forgot the project for many years. But when the airport idea was revived (under the Socialist government) in the early 2000s, farmers called for help and occupiers arrived, creating a conflict-prone graft of at least three very distinct groups—farmers, occupiers, townspeople—who began sharing a territory and a movement.

This kind of coalition is already quite singular when we compare it to similar land-based movements in Australia, for example, or the United States, Canada, and other settler-based former colonies. Most land-based struggles in the Americas, like Chiapas, Standing Rock in the Dakotas, or any of the many pipeline blockades in Canada are largely Indigenously peopled and Indigenously led. Non-Indigenous supporters, of course, join in, but the dynamics of the movement are necessarily conjugated through the troubled history of Native peoples' relationship to their lands. For example, at the origin of what remains the largest of the recent US territorial struggles—the movement against the building of the Dakota

Access Pipeline—was the invitation issued in spring 2016 by the Standing Rock Sioux to anyone who would stand with them to protect water, land, and future generations to travel to the site threatened by imminent pipeline construction. By late summer, some ten thousand people had answered the call, and an occupation took shape under the clearly identified leadership of a seven-tribe council of elders. A similar dynamic prevailed in the Larzac movement in France when the 103 farm families who had signed a pledge not to sell their land to the government called for help. While the groups and individuals who came to support the farmers were of a diversity never before seen in France—Maoists, Occitan separatists, pacifists, revolutionaries committed to the overthrow of the government, nuns—it was the farmers, the original families who held the reins of the movement, who made the decisions. At the ZAD, on the other hand, with its improbable assortment of different components made up of old or historic farmers, younger and more radical farmers from the area, petty-bourgeois shopkeepers in nearby villages, elected officials, anarchist occupiers, and naturalists who do not even believe in farming, no one group was in a leadership position. This created a different kind of territorial movement than the Larzac or Standing Rock, as well as a sharp divergence from those ideologically based or identitarian struggles familiar to us in the history of the left. As one ZAD dweller put it, the need to find a way to hold together the diverse but equal components that make it up requires “more tact than tactics.”[42]

In Valparaíso, Chile, a similar exercise in solidarity among diverse groups achieved a notable victory. At the end of 2017, the Chilean Supreme Court voided the permit to construct an enormous shopping mall that would have covered the entire historic harbor area, a working seafront. The resolution ended another ten-year battle between inhabitants and

developers. North American—style shopping malls in Chile, like airports in Spain, have mushroomed throughout the country, ushered in by way of the tried-and-true language of modernization, job creation, and economic growth. But this particular project dwarfed all the others in scale: it was slated to include 162 luxury boutiques, in addition to convention centers and even a theme park. Once more, another unlikely alliance—this one made up principally of dockworkers, artists, urbanists, and students—saw the commercial center clearly for what it was: a space designed not for them but for tourists and visiting business executives, and thus a pillage of the common good. This was another protracted war, but though it took ten years of concerted actions, legal maneuvers, and improvisations, they succeeded in defending their city and its seafront.

In April 2021, a movement began to defend the Weelaunee Forest in Atlanta, Georgia, from being leveled and replaced with a $90 million police training complex. “Cop City,” as opponents called the project, would pave over 381 acres of the largest urban forest in North America to construct a terrain where police could train with Israeli commandos, imported for the job, to learn how to handle urban-warfare scenarios. After the standard attempts to pressure the city council into not giving final approval to its $30 million contribution to the project had failed, occupiers took to the trees, building and inhabiting makeshift tree houses, their supplies brought to them by an array of helpers: schoolchildren and their parents, students from Emory University and other nearby colleges, working-class and poor community members from the majority-Black neighborhood adjoining the forest, among those for whom the loss of their cherished nearby green space would surely be more devastating than for other Atlantans. The forest occupation—half festival, half refugee camp—lasted until a brutal eviction in January 2023.[43]

It is important to underline, as Lefebvre does more generally, the lack of identitarian or ideological unity at the heart of such coalitions. Communal forms of “inhabiting” or “sharing usage”—particularly of the land—are directly political in a way that allows us to break with modalities of ideology and identitarianism. The ZAD was not a little chapel of like-minded followers singing the same hymn—recall, in this light, the reluctance of the occupier I cited earlier to serve on the “Cycle of the Twelve” and thus confront the fractious disputes among the occupiers. The ZAD collective, Mauvaise Troupe, gave a name to the process of maintaining tactical diversity in the face of a common enemy—they called it “composition.”

Composition is another name for the collective subject formed out of the many different kinds of people engaged in building and continuing the occupation through all its many metamorphoses. It bears a clear relationship to the relational political subjectivity that characterized earlier movements of the 1960s and ’70s, as in the tripartite coalition discussed earlier that emerged in Nantes 1968 when *paysans* joined students and striking workers. A relational subjectivity of a similar sort certainly grew out of the encounter between the farmers in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan (who began by defending their way of life and learned along the way what kind of overwhelming violence the state had in store for them), and the urban students and workers (who displaced themselves to join the farmers, and in the process learned for the first time how and where the food they ate was produced). The kind of social base created at the ZAD, though, or at the Stop Cop City occupation in Atlanta, for example, was different—essentially a working alliance, as in the movements of the 1960s and ’70s discussed above, but one that also entails the sharing over time of a physical territory, a living space.

When people of starkly different backgrounds and beliefs come together pragmatically on an everyday basis to perform the tasks and devise the ever-shifting agendas of a territorial occupation, something like a polemical political community is created. Composition begins when people of different origins, with different ways of thinking, different histories and relations to the land, different skills, and sometimes vastly different risk tolerance decide to act together, under the presumption of equality, to defend a territory. A new collective subject—the result of mutual displacements and dis-identifications and the action of equals *as equals*—is produced, essentially, through practice, through creative, shared engagement in building, defending, and sustaining the life of the occupation day by day. The product of a massive investment in organizing life in common, composition dispenses with the kinds of exclusions based on ideas, identities, or ideologies so frequently encountered in radical milieus, the whole tired sectarianism of the history of the left. As such, it is a manner of making a world, the weaving together of a new kind of solidarity —one where the unity of experience counts more than the divergence of opinions, and one that amplifies, as well, Kropotkin's conviction that solidarity is not an ethics or a moral sentiment but, rather, a revolutionary strategy, and perhaps the most important one of all.

A compositional logic is at work as much in an Indigenously led occupation like Standing Rock as it was at Notre-Damedes-Landes or Atlanta. At the heart of the Standing Rock action was an unprecedented alliance made up of over 350 Indigenous nations, some from as far away as Australia, the Arctic regions, and Central America. But nothing about this impressive display of pan-Indigenism was "natural," nor could it be presumed: some of the tribal economies of nations supporting the Sioux, for example, were themselves deeply tied to energy extraction, including the

Crow (coal) and the Osage (oil).[44] Deep divisions separated the Council of Elders (some of whom had more elaborate ties than most to the local, nonnative community) from the younger occupiers of the Red Warrior camp, who favored more subversive militant actions than did the elders. Yet, as winter closed in, it was the initial alliance between Indigenous tribes that inspired the many non-Native protestors—anti-fracking militants, movie actresses, Black Lives Matter militants, religious groups, US Army veterans—to travel to North Dakota and join the ramshackle occupation, as well as the many who supported it from afar.

The constructive process by which such disparate and autonomous forces unite and cooperate with each other is not at all straightforward. It creates a political community far more polemical in nature than does one that strives for consensus. This is not a coalition of subjects who each remain the same throughout, for composition neither builds uniformity nor leaves groups or individuals unchanged. New arrivals at the Standing Rock occupation, for example, would certainly find their identities as, say, white environmentalists, decentered, to say the least. Yet, while composition creates commonality, it does not seek to homogenize the multiple segments of the movement. Cohesion in the face of a common enemy does not result in orthodoxy but, rather, in a continuing working internal eclecticism and diversity of methods. Thus, as Lefebvre remarks, the allergy of political parties to these sorts of land-based movements as well, of course, as the reverse—the feeling is mutual.

The diversity of methods, or “complementarity of practices,” as it has come to be called, is a vital part of the equality assumed between the different components of the movement. Such a diverse makeup allows it to express itself through various kinds of actions; at the ZAD, these included filing legal briefs, building and maintaining communication with distant

support groups, graphic design, frontal confrontations with the police, cataloging endangered species on the zone, and sabotaging machinery. No one method was presumed superior to another; neither legality nor illegality, violence nor nonviolence, was fetishized. Proponents of one method refrained from arguing the superiority of their way. As a result, some segments might find themselves making more visible contributions or louder interventions at certain times, while remaining recessive at others; when the latter occurs, as in a musical composition, other instruments are there to take up the melody. The movement never puts all of its eggs in the same basket. Its strength, especially in the face of a state that tries ceaselessly to divide and conquer by pitting one group against another, derives largely from a complementarity of methods.

Eclecticism and the disagreements it can produce are often exhausting, even aggravating. So why make the effort? Because the power of the movement resides in the excess of creating something that is more than just the sum of ourselves.

What the contemporary movements of composition show is that developing strategies in common with people who have different modes of political action and different political vocabularies is not only possible but desirable, on the condition of having a clearly designated enemy in common and on the condition that solidarity, built on the presumption of equality, take effect across all the various components—solidarity not in spite of but *because of* the diversity of the groups. As a friend I encountered at the ZAD put it quite eloquently, “Our backs are against the wall. All methods are good, provided that there is not just one of them.”[45]

Restitution

Access to, as well as the shared use and communal care of the land, is at the heart of the matter. Nowhere has this point been made more forcefully than in a recent text issuing from the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes called *Prise de terre(s)*. Its authors count among those who remained at the site to continue farming the land collectively after the airport project was defeated. The pamphlet was written in the face of persistent attempts on the part of "cumulards" to regain possession of the land they had sold and abandoned during the government expropriations.[46] The very ability of the pamphlet's authors to continue their experiments in collective farming depends, as they put it, "on our ability to put the question of land and of the planet at the center of political debate."[47]

Of course, whenever and wherever the commune form emerges, the land question is always central. This was certainly the case during the last moment of awakening of a communal unconscious in the 1970s, the moment for which the battles of Sanrizuka and the Larzac have served, in this essay, as the guiding emblems. The centrality of the land issue derives in part from two simple facts: first, that the kind of autonomy needed for the development of communal practices is, above all, a matter of land; and second, that alienation from the land is the most primitive, primary source of alienation humans have experienced. Land supplies the resources for a degree of economic self-sufficiency by fostering self-sustenance—an economic semi-autonomy that is also a political semi-autonomy since it can represent a liberation not only from wage labor itself but also from the worldview, the orientation and the forms of domination—psychic and otherwise—wage labor fosters. A relationship to the land can serve as a support toward fostering ecological practices and can aid in losing the habit of consumeristic ways. Land provides the space or physical site in which to build a life in common. But it also establishes a historical anchor for that

collaboration, a gathering point for something like “paysan memory” to flourish over time. It allows the whole tissue of social intimacies, common knowledges and practices, symbolic significances, and even the “muscular consciousness” of the territory and its terrain to evolve, to be recalled, to be woven together, and to be transmitted. Land is memory.

But the centrality of the land question *today* gains considerable urgency from the knowledge—to take just one of many striking and calamitous examples—that arable land per person on the planet, by the middle of this century, will be one-quarter of what it was in the 1960s.[48] The finite nature of farmland and the accelerated destruction of the lived environment generally make the centrality of the land question to present political debates—and to present decisions both existential and political—inescapable. This is no less true in western France or post-apartheid South Africa than it is for Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) or the Kanien’kehå:ka tribe in Canada.[49] If capitalist agriculture can only wear out and deplete what little arable land remains, then sociologist Silvia Pérez-Vitoria’s statement that no social transformation of any significance can occur today unless it is based on paysan agriculture is not wide of the mark.[50]

But what sort of transformation can be envisioned? Recall in our earlier discussion that Henri Lefebvre made large-scale social transformation ultimately dependent on the suppression of private property of the land. He was, of course, not the first to do so; many Communards and Communard sympathizers in the nineteenth century, not to mention Karl Marx, were among those most adamant on the point. All arable land, Communard Elisée Reclus maintained, must be held in common, as it was held in common by many “so-called savage societies” where want was unknown.[51] William Morris, Britain’s foremost defender of the memory of the Paris

Commune, believed, like Reclus, that the first step that had to be taken (and from which everything else would then follow) was for land to be held in common:

> The resources of nature, mainly the land and those other things which can only be used for the reproduction of wealth and which are the effect of social work, should not be owned in severalty, but by the whole community for the benefit of the whole.[52]

In a similar vein, German philosopher Gustave Landauer's version of socialist transformation, which he saw taking shape around the creation of loosely federated cooperatives of production and consumption, was dependent on one principal condition: the possession of land.

But does "holding the land in common," as Reclus put it, or "land … owned by the whole community … for the benefit of the whole," in Morris's words, translate necessarily into the complete end of private property of the land across the board? For Lefebvre, at least, the complete suppression of private property of the land was what I called earlier a kind of asymptotic horizon—a receding point on which to focus, a way to orient ourselves—an orientation, that is, and not something to be achieved all at once, en masse, by and for everyone everywhere at the same time. The erosion of proprietary ideology, Lefebvre thought, could be furthered through political education and above all to the extent that the cultivation and spread of non-accumulative practices like appropriation became—the choice of words is intentional—commonplace. Land that appears underused can be given a use; a collective space to gather can be created, built, and frequented where such a place is lacking (as the Gilets Jaunes showed recently, to great effect); an area threatened with destruction can be defended. On this point, the authors of *Prise de terre(s)* are in full agreement. There is no need at all to wait, they write, for a total reversal of

the economy to precipitate other forms of social possession. We cannot declare or decree the end of private property or wait for it to happen in some complete way. It does not await us at the end of the long train ride. “Embryos of communal power and local solidarities,” those sites, alliances, and collaborations that *already* put into practice a different set of property relations, help make private property recede by expanding spheres of activity in which the economic rationality of the market does not prevail.[53]

When Parisian Communard Arthur Arnould, writing a few years after the Commune in 1878, recognized the centrality of the question of land and its usage to any political revolution, he spoke not in terms of regaining possession of the land in the sense of property but, rather, in terms of the land’s “restitution” to the collective: “Social Revolution, generally, must necessarily adopt a *collectivist* character, which is to say it must proceed to the restitution of the soil and all the tools of labor, capital or otherwise, into the hands of the collectivity.” To the extent that it lies outside of a logic of accumulation or expropriation, Arnould’s choice of the word “restitution” is a very interesting one. “Restitution of the soil” could well be a fitting slogan for many of the place-specific struggles across the globe today that seek to place at the center of political action the effort to overcome the alienation from the land. Without such restitution to the collective, Arnould adds, “the state, which we thought abolished, would be found again in each commune.”[54]

“Restitution” suggests a symbiotic relationship between the land and those who work it that has nothing to do with collectivizing in the old Soviet style, nor with nationalization. Frequently used in the context of Indigenous land-based struggles, the term evokes a historic relationship to the land—one that has perhaps been lost, stripped away violently, or forgotten, but that is still present in some form, available to be reawakened

and restored by an ongoing process of relearning and reinventing practices designed to preserve land in view of future generations. Knowing how to use the land, in other words, implies availing ourselves of traditions that preserved and defended it in view of future generations, as opposed to the now-dominant mode of claiming and exerting the right to make the very most of it right away. These are practices that extend solidarity to the dead and departed, in ways that Elisée Reclus, perhaps better than any other Parisian Communard, knew how to express most fully.[55] But, by the same token, these ways of doing just as actively convoke those who will come after us. The creative labor of past generations has bestowed a common inheritance to be attended to and protected. The world's resources, like the rich endowment provided by past creative labor, are common property and should be managed and cared for collectively.

It should not surprise us too much that an urban Communard like Arnould should be concerned with restitution of the soil. As political scientist Massimiliano Tomba makes clear in his discussion of the attitude and actions taken toward private property during the Paris Commune, Communard views on possession derived more directly from the communally regulated property forms of the *Ancien Régime,* those paysan arrangements and agreements which defined the common use of the land, than they did from the individual property rights proclaimed in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man. For Communards in 1871, the uses and needs of the group took precedence over any abstract right of the individual to own property. They did not contest ownership; they opposed any absoluteness given to the right to property. Tomba uses two examples to illustrate Communard ideas on social possession—one a literary/historical parable taken from Cicero and the other derived from their own practices.

In the first, Cicero, in a passage dear to and cited by Proudhon, compares the earth to a great theater:

> "Though the theater is a common place (commune), yet it is correct to say that the particular seat a man has taken (*occuparit*) belongs to him." In this way Proudhon accepts the right to possession, but limits it to use and need. It makes no sense that someone, in a theater, appropriates "at the same time one place in the pit, another in the boxes, and a third in the gallery." In this way, the occupant, for Proudhon, is "a possessor or usufructuary, a condition that excludes proprietorship." The right to usufruct is regulated by use and need, which varies over time and according to the number of occupants.[56]

By the same token, when Communards in 1871 requisitioned the empty apartments and workshops abandoned by terrified bourgeois who had fled the city as the Commune came into being, they were not enacting a change of property ownership. Rather, they were reconfiguring the rights of property to be that of the group rather than the individual. From the point of view of the collective, an owner's right to property did not include leaving such valuable resources as workshops and dwelling places vacant and unused.

The Communards' whittling away of proprietary ideology is inseparable from the ecological critique of capitalism produced by some of the event's survivors during the decade after the massacre. In *Communal Luxury*, I showed the earliest outlines of something resembling eco-socialism taking shape in the discussions and debates held by Communards like Paul Lafargue, Gustave Lefrangais, and Reclus, along with fellow travelers—notably Marx, Morris, and Kropotkin. In the collaborations and cross-pollinations that took place in London, the Jura Mountains in Switzerland, and wherever Commune exiles took refuge, refugees and their supporters forged an uncompromising understanding of the anti-ecological nature of capitalism and the ravages wrought by industry and commerce. The

understanding that grew out of the experience of the Commune and its aftermath would be largely forgotten during the long counterrevolution that immediately set in, of which the targeted barbary of the Versaillais reprisals against the Commune—the bourgeois attempt to exterminate one by one and en masse their class enemy that launched the Third Republic—comprised the bloody first act. With the massacre, the bourgeoisie showed they had assumed the necessary power to take full control. Bourgeois industrialists and rich provincial growers made their historical alliance, soldering together, for the first time, capitalist society and the Republican state, and introducing the structural transformations in the mode of exploitation and accumulation necessary to rationalize, in the coming years, both production and battle. The accelerated colonialist agenda of the decades that follow marked the undisputed reign of that alliance. In short, the demise of the Commune initiated a deeply conservative retrenchment inside national identity that extended through Vichy and remained unbroken until the political upheavals of the 1960s and ’70s. Only then, in the wake of and inspired by the strikes, insurrections, and political experimentation of the long 1960s, did there emerge (or reemerge) an understanding of the fundamental incompatibility between capitalist growth and human and planetary survival that was as uncompromising in nature as the one put forward by Kropotkin, Reclus, and Morris one hundred years earlier. The Paris Commune and the communal movements of the 1960s and ’70s, in this sense, can be seen to constitute “bookends” of sorts, surrounding and in effect enclosing the whole era of what Arthur Rimbaud called “bourgeois magic”: the hundred years of capitalist accumulation, modernization, and over-productivity—the period during which, in the words of historian Jason Moore, “capitalism exhausted the historical relation that enabled it to appropriate the work of nature with such extraordinary power.”[57] The

relation is exhausted, in other words, because capitalism exhausted the planet.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I made the choice to represent the ecological thought that reemerged in the 1970s largely through the writings of Maria Mies and Henri Lefebvre. But, viewed from the vantage point of the half century that separates readers today from those years, it is only the narcissism of small differences that distinguishes Mies and Lefebvre from a whole host of staggeringly productive anti-productivist thinkers who were among their cohort: Félix Guattari, Françoise d'Eaubonne, Murray Bookchin, François Partant, Raymond Williams, Cornelius Castoriadis, Silvia Federici, Ivan Illich, André Gorz, Herbert Marcuse, and many others. Theory, after all, is nothing except the uses to which it can be put, and most, if not all, of these thinkers had made their way painstakingly through the Marxist tradition and emerged at the other end with their own maverick, sometimes renegade sense of the uses to which Marx could be put—uses that were neither economistic nor deterministic. Federici's reworking of the concept of primitive accumulation or Lefebvre's rethinking of appropriation are cases in point. Among the many interesting transversals that can be made across the thinking of this cohort are the importance of place creation and dissolution (Williams, Mies, Lefebvre), the critique of technology (Illich,

Marcuse), and the centrality of the Paris Commune as political example (Lefebvre, Bookchin).

But perhaps the most important factor that characterizes the collective intelligence of the era was that so many of these thinkers arrived at an ecological perspective—from a great variety of disciplines—through the trans-disciplinary concept of "everyday life." Lefebvre is, of course, largely credited with its conceptualization, and his own path through the postwar period was defined by the critique he mounted for decades of the privatization of everyday life very much underway during the buildup of the society of consumption. In that critique, I saw for the first time what philosophy looks like when it turns away from building worlds out of abstract ideas (to which it alone holds the key) and instead explores, in collaborative fellowship with other modes of thinking and acting, the concrete, pragmatic reality of a world approached in common with others. For Lefebvre, everyday life was a site of commonality outside the workplace where all the distinct components and practices of human experience that escape specialization are interrelated in an organic whole, a "common ground"—one that is neither the terrain of the monadic subject nor that of institutions. Lefebvre's powerful intuition was that the level of shared existence that society relegates to its margin—its residues, its leftovers—might well furnish the best access to the social as such.

This was no less true for André Gorz. For Gorz, as well, it was the "culture of the quotidian" he borrowed from his friend Ivan Illich that in his view formed the necessary starting point for any analysis of contemporary capitalist society. The "culture of the quotidian" in Illich's work consisted of all the intuitive practices and know-hows that go without saying and that form almost a second nature, the collective knowledge by which individuals make their way in, and understand, the world. Such vernacular savoir faires,

Gorz and Illich maintained, were being progressively commodified, if not confiscated, by experts into a privatized and highly compartmentalized realm of siloed knowledge.

Beginning an analysis of the present from the practically anchored, experiential perspective of "everyday life" had two primary effects. It was, first of all, a way for Gorz, Lefebvre, and other thinkers as well to begin theorizing political sites beyond the workplace—and this at the risk of being seen, in so doing, as having abandoned what counted as "real politics," along with its long-supposed lone agent, the worker, and the systemic changes he and his comrades were destined to pull off. Thus, for Federici, Mies, and other feminists, the repetitive burdens of everyday care, largely shouldered by women—the whole gendered division of labor surrounding social reproduction—became a vantage point that allowed the politics of the household to come into distinct focus. Raymond Williams, intent on writing an environmental history of the Black Mountains in Wales, turned to the novel form as that which would best allow him to delve into the lived world of the regions' inhabitants and the daily qualities and rhythms of those lives.[1] Gorz and Lefebvre, each in his own way, turned their attentions to the question of habitation and housing—not in quantitative terms but rather in terms of the qualitative factors in the urban landscape that nurture human capacities rather than destroy them.

The second important effect of beginning with everyday life is that it enabled (and enables) one to think dialectically. Everyday life may well be the site of alienation, but it is also the site of its undoing, the terrain for social change. Thinking the everyday as residue and as resource was a way of working through and with ideology, as a means of working against it. Félix Guattari called his version of quotidian culture "existential territories," referring to the ways that consumer culture and the media set

limits and constraints on human existence. But for him, the term encompassed just as fully people's potential to develop different ecological perspectives and practices that deviated from capitalist norms. When Lefebvre and the Situationists talked about the "colonization of everyday life," they were designating the everyday as one of the primary sites of dispossession in postwar life. That designation, though, was matched by an equally powerful grasp of the rich transformative resources daily life harbors. Similarly, for Gorz, everyday life was a way to understand both past and absolutely contemporary alienations, in one breath, with all the various attempts, past and present, to overcome them. Gorz's perception of the destructive consequences of capitalism for social space, daily life, and the natural world went hand in hand with a willingness to take seriously practices and experiments in other modes of life—reconquests of lived time and space that act to encourage the capacity for cooperation, association, and all the other skills and habits needed for a post-productivist society to develop. Gorz was particularly attentive to the forms of sociability devised by young people rejected by a "work society" that does not need them and who refuse to play the game—that is, who refuse to be made to compete for jobs that have become ever more rare, ever more precarious, and that increasingly entail participation, indirectly or (more frequently now) directly, in the ongoing destruction of the lived environment. In their invention of spaces of autonomy, spaces where salaried time has ceased to be the dominant social time and the time of cooperation has instead filled the void, Gorz, like Guattari, saw the premises for societies made up of people who had made the choice to become more and more the subjects of their own lives.[2]

In an era like our own, replete with collapsologist rhetoric and other shared nihilisms, the capacity to think dialectically may well be—like

sewing or the cultivation of medicinal herbs—one of those skills that would be wise to relearn as we begin to build a post-productionist world. Instead, the media all too often offers us a standoff between two reified theoretical entities: a caricatured Marxism-Leninism decked out in full Second Internationalist trappings on the one side, and a wan, depoliticized environmentalism on the other. And yet the urgency of the land question today trumps any urgency such non-debates of the genre "Lenin versus Latour" or, in another register, "Lordon versus the ZAD" can muster.

Political philosopher Miguel Abensour once remarked that there is more truth in even a small bit of praxis than there is in the most sophisticated theory or the most seamless utopia. The truth of his intuition can be gauged by returning once again to the example of the ZAD at Notre-Dame-des-Landes and its afterlives. A major part of the political intelligence of the ZAD during its struggle against the airport had to do with the porous nature of its boundaries: the flow of people and ideas in and out of the territory, the cultivation of supporters' groups throughout France and beyond, and the openness of occupiers to welcoming vast quantities of visitors into their lives as well as their openness to participating fully in struggles other than their own. They practiced a form of conviviality that doubled as political education. They recognized, like Reclus (and Kropotkin) before them, that the greatest danger faced by a commune was self-enclosure: "Never will we separate ourselves from the world to build a little chapel hidden off in some vast darkness."[3] That danger, the danger of self-enclosure, if anything, became more pronounced after the victory over the airport, as media attention faded away and as the occupiers who chose to remain confronted not only the antagonism and resentments of those who left but the possibility of becoming a tiny, pristine cooperative eco-bocage, surrounded by vast agro-industrial holdings managed from afar by "cumulards." The

need had become even greater to live the commune and its environment as a dialectical whole and to devise pragmatic ways of doing so.

Soulèvements de la Terre is a movement that grew organically out of the experience of the ZAD, and that traces its origins and inspirations farther back in its own regional history, to the 1970s and the Paysans-Travailleurs initiative with which I began this essay. Taking off from where the pamphlet *Prise de terre(s)* left off, the movement is finding ways to place at the center of political action the question of land, as well as the effort to overcome the alienation from the land. The goal of the movement, as one of its organizers put it, is the relational or highly dialectical one of "linking up the land of the paysans with the planet of the ecologists."[4] In practice, this means amplifying and connecting particular ecological and paysan struggles throughout France whose ambitions exceed the local level. By broadening the scale to the national (or planetary) level, the movement builds on the tangible victory of the anti-airport struggle at Notre-Dame-des-Landes at the same time that it decentralizes and, in a way, de-fetishizes that first ZAD. In a choreographed series of consecutive actions throughout France, the movement conducts occupations in view of land restitution or defense on the one hand, and blockages of industries engaged in, say, various forms of extraction, or in pesticide manufacturing, on the other. Power centers like the FNSEA (the national farmers' union) that decide "from above" the attribution and use of the land are also targeted. Both rural and urban localities are at play, since both are at war with the same hydra-headed monster. A typical site might be a Monsanto factory producing toxic pesticides in Lyon, a communal workers' garden in Besançon to be defended, or a farming area in western France under threat from the agro-industry's attempt to sequester, stockpile, and privatize all the available water in the region in the form of gargantuan *méga-bassines* (mega-basins).

The movement is at its early stages. They have spawned a sister group focused on marine ecology—the Soulèvements de la Mer—as well as a coalition of popular gardens. Not least of their accomplishments is their regular provision of political education for the hundreds, sometimes thousands of people who join in and participate in an action, and who may never before have given a thought (as I never had before I went to the action in the Deux-Sèvres and witnessed the sheer size of a méga-bassine) to the battle over water that is well underway in the countryside.

Participants in the actions form neither a party nor a class. They form instead a flexible, collective, cooperative arrangement. Again, the model here is the composition of groups that came to make up the ZAD after 2008. Like the ZAD in those years, Soulèvements de la Terre is a mixed bag—regionally, in terms of generation and social background, as well as in terms of political strategy. The three primary groups or collectives that form the tributaries to the movement—"autonomous" occupiers from the ZAD, young climate activists from environmental organizations like Extinction Rebellion or Youth for Climate, and paysans from the Confédération Paysanne—share a conviction regarding the urgency of the land question as the first priority. But, in many ways, they share little else. The paysans are union members; for some of them, their stakes have to do mostly with their profession and could thus be seen as largely corporatist in nature. Besides, paysans have to be up early every day to milk the cows; thus, militant actions extending into the late nights or ones that require being away from home for several days may be fine for students, but not for paysans. Extinction Rebellion members are expected to adhere to a strict policy of nonviolence, while "autonomes" and some of the younger paysans are, shall we say, more flexible on the issue. For now, the ZAD's experience in composition or in cultivating a "complementarity of methods" has, through

the effort of tireless negotiations, helped create an effective situational alliance between the collectives, who are respectful of different ways of fighting and engaged in a well-designed campaign built on specific actions. They know that their success depends on their capacity to forge alliances and to create more massive mobilizations—something that is not too far-fetched to imagine, since small local ecological struggles tend to be widely and sympathetically viewed as legitimate and, when successful, tend to be more generative of hope than many other kinds of political victories. Through flexibility, a clear sense of the stakes of the battle and the enemy they share, and above all through repeated gestures of cooperation, they make a common front. This is a front that avoids the fixity of class or party but that is nevertheless *organized*. It takes the overly abstract call to "save the climate" and brings it down to earth—in fact, and quite pragmatically, to particular plots of earth. This is the commune form for our own time.

As with any instantiation of the commune form, the members of Soulèvements are more than willing to run the risk of having their battles appear too local, too disconnected from a more global struggle. They are willing to run the risk of being considered insignificant by those who believe the *real* task is that of bringing about systemic change. The latter are those who occupy the comfortable position of awaiting the single global movement that will dismantle capital and transform the whole of production and producers in one fell swoop, here, there, and everywhere. Soulèvements is sidestepping "systemic change" for the very good reason that the acceleration of environmental catastrophes associated with climate change and the precipitous disappearance of arable land increasingly render awaiting something like systemic change difficult to distinguish from anything more than an argument *for* capital, for the status quo. Not to mention the fact that "systemic change," when enacted in the past, has done

little more than reinforce existing structures and often brings the same faces back to different windows.

Present-day communards are also willing to run a second risk as well: that of appearing to be recalling to life a society, a way of life, that belongs, like paysans, to another age. From their perspective, once again, the acceleration of environmental catastrophe associated with climate change and the precipitous disappearance of arable land increasingly obscure the distinction between what is past and what is from the future. After all, the commune form *is* the primary, age-old way of bringing people together through association and cooperation. Embracing the vitality and conviviality of an archaic form like the commune seems, if anything, to enhance the ability of groups and individuals to confront the new social, economic, and ecological conditions of the present. But to bring such an alternative way of living back effectively means reanimating it and making it entirely contemporary. Where the ancient commune was tied to defending its particular regional site, the contemporary mode is trans-regional—that is, occurring in many federated regions (but not necessarily occurring everywhere, as would an abstraction). Soulèvements bases its actions on concrete living places, regional particularities, and the specific needs of the people and life-forms inhabiting them. In this way, they work within the conditions of the present all the better by reanimating the ancient mode that best addresses the future.

AFTERWORD

In the months since I wrote the conclusion to this essay, it became all too apparent that groups like Soulèvements de la Terre or the occupiers of the Weelawnee Forest were running a third risk as well: that of severe police repression, and even death.

On January 18, 2023—almost five years to the day from the French government's announcement that the airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes would not be built—Atlanta police shot and killed Manuel Páez Terán (known as "Tortuguita"), a Venezuelan ecological activist and occupier in the Stop Cop City movement. Tortuguita thus became the first ecological activist to be killed during a protest by police in the United States. Independent autopsy reports sharply contradicted the police version of the killing. In the months following Tortuguita's murder, over forty supporters of Stop Cop City were arrested and charged with "domestic terrorism."

In March 2023, a large group, some thirty thousand people, made their way to Sainte-Soline, in the Deux-Sèvres region of France, to protest the enclosure and privatization of water through the building of méga-bassines. This was the first time since the Larzac, fifty years earlier, that such a large contingent from France and beyond had traveled so far for a political reason. At Sainte-Soline, we were met by a phalanx of tanks and police

vehicles encircling the circumference of the bassine under construction—essentially a vast, empty pit. By their own admission, police launched over five thousand grenades at protestors in two hours, including militarygrade grenades whose usage is outlawed in every European country except France. Over two hundred protestors were injured, with the two most seriously hurt sentenced to hover in a coma between life and death for weeks, even months. (Both, in the end, survived).[1] As I write, the trials have begun for the dozens of ecological activists arrested across the country, who are being prosecuted, like their comrades in Atlanta, under charges of "eco-" or "domestic terrorism." The government's announced intention to administratively "dissolve" Soulèvements, the ultimate political weapon in the state's arsenal, used primarily against Islamic terrorists and neofascist groups, has been temporarily suspended while France's highest court considers the merits of the case.

Throughout history, emancipatory movements have been regularly met with extreme police and military repression: witness the Paris Commune, the long civil rights movement in the United States, the Zapatista uprising in Mexico. But the degree of both police repression and judicial persecution surrounding Atlanta, Sainte-Soline, and similar situations gives a clear picture of the kind of stakes governments believe to be at play in what are so frequently perceived and described, by people across the ideological spectrum, as "little local skirmishes."

Little local skirmishes like Stop Cop City and Soulèvements de la Terre create panic among the elites for at least two good reasons. A movement that may appear to be small in scale or circumscribed geographically is engaged in making visible what is in fact a full-blown war between two competing ways of life. Soulèvements' skill at amplifying and conveying to city dwellers the crimes being committed in the countryside has everything

to do with their dramatic flair, their attention to props, graphics, costumes, accessories, and timing—in short, their ability to *stage* the conflict at hand. And the conflict between the two competing ways of life could not be starker. In an earlier chapter I described the war in terms of the "airworld" versus the territory. In the French countryside, and in rural areas generally, the same war is being fought between wealthy producers engaged in intensive agriculture and monocultural farming on the one hand, and partisans of an agriculture built around small holdings, cooperation, and shared access to the land and water on the other. The first group remains blind or oblivious to the environmental consequences of agro-industrial methods. The second group sees the need to alter not only what we produce, but how—and how much—we produce as well.[2] On the first side, in short, are the state and capital; on the other is the commune form.

Second, although (and because) they are geographically circumscribed, occupations like these create a certain exemplarity of struggle that resonates far beyond their particular site. The lending records at one of Atlanta's lending libraries showed Tortuguita to have borrowed three books in the weeks previous to his murder: *A Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of the Southern Appalachians, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants,* and the book written by the ZAD collective, the Mauvaise Troupe, *The Zad and NoTAV: Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence.* Each time and place that a particular defense is implemented and the war between the two competing ways of life is publicly restaged, the confrontation attains the status of an example, changing our ideas about what is possible, giving us practical illustrations that another life is and can be lived. Each instantiation makes visible an act of self- and collective emancipation in the making. Exemplarity and its peculiarly powerful resonance creates a linkage or echo

between more or less distant places in the world and in history. But it is only by *relocalizing* each experience of defense in its precise time and place —by eschewing, in other words, the violence of abstraction—that its emancipatory resonance can enter forcefully into the figurability of the here and now.

Where the ancient, medieval commune mounted an (often chauvinistic) defense of its particular regional site, the contemporary commune mode manifests itself in several regions at once or in close sequencing: sites and local skirmishes based on the situations, histories, and specific needs of the people and other life-forms inhabiting each one thus find themselves "federated"—linked together by the coordinating actions and the relations between groups and individuals established within Soulèvements. The federation that eluded Parisian Communards in 1871 and that preoccupied Commune survivors as a missed opportunity (indeed, perhaps as the epitome of such) finds a contemporary elaboration in the collaborative solidarity so carefully invented and maintained between groups. Soulèvements has created a common horizon of situated struggles—and, as such, a shared orientation. Because the commune form is at once a struggle and a way of life—the context of revolution and the means of bringing it about, to paraphrase Kropotkin—it already contains elements of life beyond capitalist society. On its own, this aspect of the form is enough to generate the panic we have witnessed among elites at Sainte-Soline, the Weelaunee Forest, and in their various afterlives.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 This quotation is drawn from Marx's 1870 first draft of *The Civil War in France*, available at marxengels.public-archive.net.

2 Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 60.

3 Karl Marx, letter to Dr. Kugelmann (April 12, 1871), in ibid., p. 86.

4 Peter Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, trans. N. F. Dryhurst (London: Heinemann, 1909), p. 180.

5 Ibid., p. 95, emphasis in original.

6 Ibid., p. 90.

7 Ibid., p. 181.

8 Peter Kropotkin, *Words of a Rebel*, trans. George Woodcock (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992), p. 81.

9 While my examples in this essay are frequently French and modern, I should probably take this occasion to stress that I am obviously not claiming the commune form to be either novel or particularly French—these are but the limits of my own formation. For a recent bibliography of studies of the commune conceived in its international dimension, see Quentin Deluermoz and Eric Fournier, "Persistances de la Commune," in *Revue d'Histoire du XIXieme Siècle* 63 (2021–2), pp. 9–19.

1: NANTES, NOT NANTERRE

1 Joseph Potiron, cited in Guillaume Désanges and Franfois Piron, *Contrevents* (Paris/Saint-Nazaire: Paraguay Press/Le Grand Café, 2021), p. 177. Here and elsewhere, unless otherwise noted, translations from the French are mine. Throughout this text, I have chosen to keep the word *paysan in* French. The English term "farmer" does not distinguish between a smallholding cultivator *(paysan)* and an industrial farmer associated with agri-business *(agriculteur).*

2 Jean-Emile Vié, cited in "13 mai 1968," *Ouest-France,* May 9, 2008.

3 Jean-Emile Vié, cited in Sarah Guilbaud, *Mai 68Nantes* (Paris: Coiffard Editions, 2004), p. 97.

4 Extract from the journal *Les Cahiers de Mai,* special Nantes edition, June 1968, pp. 9–10.

5 Yannick Guin, *La Commune de Nantes* (Paris: Maspero, 1969), p. 133.

6 See former Panther Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin's 1993 text *Anarchism and the Black Revolution,* available at libcom.org.

7 Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times,* trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 97.

8 See Vincent Lemire, "Nanterre, les bidonvilles et les étudiants," in Philippe Artières and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, eds., *68: Une histoire collective* (*1962–1981*) (Paris: La Découverte, 2008), pp. 137–43.

9 Potiron, in Désanges and Piron, *Contre-vents,* p. 176.

10 Bernard Lambert, cited in Bernard Lambert, Franfoise Bourquelot, and Nicole Mathieu, "Paroles de Bernard Lambert: Un Paysan révolutionnaire," *Strates* 4 (1989), p. 10.

11 Olivier Tric, cited in Désanges and Piron, *Contre-vents,* p. 179.

12 Lambert, cited in Yves Chavagne, *Bernard Lambert: 30 ans de combat paysan* (Quimper: Editions la digitale, 1988), p. 33.

13 Ibid., p. 6.

14 Michel Rocard, preface to Bernard Lambert, *Les Paysans dans la lutte des classes* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 9.

15 Lambert, cited in René Bourrigaud, *Paysans de Loire-Atlantique* (Nantes: Editions du Centre d'histoire du travail, 2001), p. 234.

16 See Kristin Ross, "The Wind from the West," in *The Politics and Poetics of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 2023), pp. 275–6.

17 See Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 8–10.

18 Bernard Lambert, speech on the Larzac Plateau, summer 1973. Film, Christian Rouaud, "Paysan et rebelle. Un portrait de Bernard Lambert," Pathé Télévision, INA Entreprise, France 2 and France 3 west, 2002.

19 Michel Debré, speech televised on October 28, 1971, cited in the video “La lutte du Larzac, 1971–1981,” Atelier Arcadie, distribution “Gardarem lo Larzac,” Potensac, APAL, 2000, 185mm.

20 See Donald Reid, *L’Affaire Lip: 1968–1981* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2020).

21 Grégoire Chamayou, *La Société ingouvernable* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2018), p. 157.

22 See Erag Ramizi, “Troublesome Anachronisms: The Peasant Question and European Realism, 1887–1917,” PhD diss., New York University, September 2016, pp. 1–48.

23 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), cited in ibid., p. 22.

24 Bernard Lambert, cited in Gaël Franquemagne, “Les Mobilizations socio-territoriales: Le Larzac, une cause en movement,” “Socio-territorial Mobilizations: The Larzac, A Cause in Motion,” PhD diss., University Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, 2009, p. 231. “Poujadism,” prevalent in the 1950s, was a conservative movement made up largely of petit bourgeois shopkeepers and artisans.

25 Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalized Economy*, trans. Patrick Camiller, Maria Mies, and Gerd Weih (London: Zed Books, 1999).

26 For a feminist sociological analysis of this alternative economy, see Geneviève Pruvost, *Quotidienpolitique* (Paris: La Découverte, 2021).

27 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, cited in Ramizi, “Troublesome Anachronisms,” p. 22.

28 Erag Ramizi, “Anachronic Potentialities,” *Diacritics* 48: 2 (2020), p. 7.

29 Marx’s most frequently cited characterization of peasants, as “sacks of potatoes,” occurs in *The Eighteenth Brumaire:* “A small holding, a peasant and his family; alongside them another small holding, another peasant and another family. A few score of these make up a village, and a few score of villages make up a Department. In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack of potatoes.” Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 124.

30 Karl Marx, *Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 71.

2: A TALE OF THREE AIRPORTS

1 Philippe Riès makes this remark in a brief but informative article, “De Narita å Notre-Dame-des-Landes: Chronique de l’obstination bureaucratique,” *Libération*, November 18, 2012.

2 Shima, cited in Shadojin, *Kaishi-suru Fukei /A Dying Landscape: The Words and Lives of the Sanrizuka Peasants* (Tokyo: Soshisha [1976], 2005), p. 13.

3 See the cycle of documentaries by Shinsuke Ogawa, *Summer in Sanrizuka* (1968), *Narita: The Peasants of the Second Fortress* (1971), *Sanrizuka—Heta Village* (1973), and *Sanrizuka—The Skies of May, the Road to the Village* (1977). See also Yann le Masson, dir., *KashimaParadise* (1973).

4 Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol.1 (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 637–8.

5 This point is eloquently made in a recent text by militant *paysan* collective L'Atelier Paysan in *Reprendre la terre aux machines* (Paris: Seuil, 2021), p. 128.

6 Fernand Ladoucer, cited in Paul Waters, "Progress Spells Doom for Family Farms," *Montreal Gazette*, December 15, 1972, p. 10.

7 Eric Gagnon Poulin, "Mirabel Airport: In the Name of Development, Modernity, and Canadian Unity," *Economic Anthropology* (April 2022), p. 7. Thanks to Tom Lamarre for alerting me to this article.

8 Bret Edwards, "Breaking New Ground: Montreal's Mirabel International Airport, Mass Aerobility, and Megaproject Development in 1960s and '70s Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 50, no. 1 (2016), p. 25.

9 Ibid., p. 21.

10 Jean de Legge and Roger Le Guen, *Dégage! … On aménage*, Collection "La province trahie," (Les Sables-d'Olonne: Editions le Cercle d'or, 1976).

11 See John Kasarda and Greg Lindsey, *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2011). See also Will Self's review of *Aerotropolis* in the *London Review of Books*, April 28, 2011, pp. 10–11.

12 Bernard Lambert, cited in Yves Chavagne, *Bernard Lambert: 30 ans de combat paysan* (Quimper: Editions la digitale, 1988), p. 179.

13 See Kristin Ross, "The Wind from the West," in *The Politics and Poetics of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 2023), pp. 271–3.

14 For a sense of how the battle against the airworld has developed in our own time, see the Global Anti-aerotropolis Movement, antiaero.org.

3: DEFENSE, APPROPRIATION, COMPOSITION, RESTITUTION

1 "Zad" entered the *Petit Robert* dictionary in 2016, defined as a "space, most often rural, occupied by militants opposed to a development project judged useless, costly and susceptible to harm the environment and the interest of the local inhabitants."

2 Shadojin, *Kaishi-suru Fukei/A Dying Landscape: The Words and Lives of the Sanrizuka Peasants* (Tokyo: Soshisha [1976], 2005), pp. 13–14.

3 Sannomiya, cited in ibid., p. 16.

4 See Kristin Ross, *The Politics and Poetics of Everyday Life*, pp. 276–81.

5 What I mean by a "transvaluation of values" can perhaps best be illustrated by returning to the 1871 Paris Commune. The gesture of defense begins by proclaiming value, even and especially a kind of excessive value, there where it had not been thought to exist before. Value is being measured by standards that can't be quantified in the customary way, in a manner I have discussed elsewhere, to which Parisian Communards gave the appropriately oxymoronic name "communal luxury." See Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury:The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 50–65.

6 See David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 164–75.

7 Karl Marx, "Marx-Zasulich Correspondence: Letters and Drafts," in Theodor Shanin, ed., *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), p. 116. The correspondence between Marx and Zasulich about the fate of the rural Russian communes is essential to any discussion of the commune form. I refer the reader to Shanin's edited volume and to my own discussion in Ross, *Communal Luxury*, pp. 82-5.

8 Raymond Williams, cited in David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (London: Blackwell, 1996), p. 29.

9 See Mauvaise Troupe Collective, *The Zad and NoTAV: Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence*, trans. and preface by Kristin Ross (London: Verso, 2018).

10 Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier, "Le projet rhythmanalytique," *Communications* 41 (1985), p. 194.

11 Henri Lefebvre, *Espace et Politique* (Paris: Anthropos, 2000), p. 146.

12 For an interesting account of one such experiment, see Helen Arnold and Daniel Blanchard's description of the time they spent in the early 1970s in a communal endeavor with Murray Bookchin in Vermont. Fabien Delmotte, "D'une crise a l'autre: Un entretien avec Helen Arnold et Daniel Blanchard," at acontretemps.org. For a history of Longo Maï, see Beatriz Graf, *Longo maï: Révolte et utopie après 68* (Paris: Thesis ars historica, 2006); for a history of the cooperative lumberyard Ambiance Bois, see Michel Lulek, *Scions … Travaillait autrement?* (Valence: Editions Repas, 2009).

13 Henri Lefebvre, cited in Gerard Deladalle and Denis Huisman, eds., *Les Philosophes frangais d'aujourd'hui par eux-mêmes: Autobiographie de la philosophie contemporaine* (Paris: C.D.U., 1959), p. 289.

14 Henri Lefebvre, *La Vallée de Campan: Etude de sociologie rurale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 19–20.

15 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1 (Paris: L'Arche, [1947] 1958), p. 209.

16 See Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 222–5. See also Gavin Grindon, "Revolutionary Romanticism: Henri Lefebvre's Revolution-as-Festival," in *Third Text* 27, no. 2 (2013), pp. 208–20.

17 "Rabelais laughed uproariously"; "the joy of spontaneous laughter." See Henri Lefebvre, *Rabelais* (Paris: Anthropos, [1955] 2001), p. 41. See also Erag Ramizi's analysis of a depiction by another reader of Rabelais, Mikhail Bakhtin, of medieval peasant laughter as "the expression of a new and free critical *historical* consciousness," in "Anachronism's Last Laugh," *Diacritics* 48, no. 2 (2020), pp. 126–40.

18 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 202.

19 Bertell Ollman, *Alienation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 89.

20 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 296.

21 Ibid., pp. 299, 296, 302.

22 See Henri Lefebvre, *La Somme et le reste* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989), pp. 596–7.

23 Ibid., p. 597.

24 Michel Trebitsch, "Preface," Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991), p. xvi.

25 The purposive effort involved in the act of "appropriation" was apparently lost on one of Lefebvre's first translators into English, Sacha Rabinowitz, who consistently mistranslates "appropriation" as "adaptation"! See Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New York: Harper, 1971).

26 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Blackwell, 1991), p. 410.

27 See Henri Lefebvre, *La Proclamation de la Commune* (Paris: La Fabrique, [1965] 2018). For the role played by *La Proclamation de La Commune* in the historiography of the Commune, see Eric Fournier, *La Commune nest pas morte* (Paris: Libertalia, 2013), pp. 122–3.

28 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 356.

29 Lefebvre, *Espace et politique*, p. 145.

30 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 373–4.

31 This point is developed eloquently in *Bogues* 6 (Summer 2018), pp. 14–15.

32 Henri Lefebvre, *Du Rural a l'Urbain* (Paris: Broché, 2001), p. 198.

33 See Lefebvre, *Espace et politique*, pp. 156–7.

34 Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (first draft, 1870), available at marxengels.public-archive.net.

35 Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899), cited in H. Read, ed., *Kropotkin: Selections from His Writings* (London: Freedom Press, 1942), p. 114.

36 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 59.

37 Charles Petit-Dutaillis, *Les Communes frangaises: Caractères et evolution des origins au XVIII siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1947), p. 21.

38 Jules Andrieu, *Notes pour server a l'histoire de la Commune de Paris en 1871* (Paris: Libertalia, [1871] 2016), p. 137.

39 Ibid., p. 171.

40 Ibid., p. 153.

41 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 380–1.

42 Mauvaise Troupe Collective, *The Zad and No TAV*, p. xxii.

43 For an illuminating discussion of composition as "the mode of organizing in profoundly disordered times" that takes as its primary example the Stop Cop City occupation, see Hugh Farrell, "The Strategy of Composition," *Ill Will*, January 14, 2023, illwill.com.

44 See Elizabeth Ellis, "Centering Sovereignty: How Standing Rock Changed the Conversation," in Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds., *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), pp. 172–97. See also Alexander Zaitchik, "On Native Ground: Standing Rock's New Spirit of Protest," in *Baffler* 34 (Spring 2017), pp. 102–16.

45 Tristan Vebens, "Notes de discussion sur les possibles dans la Zad de Notre-Dame-des-Landes et ailleurs," [self-published], August 26, 2019, p. 11.

46 "Cumulards," as their name implies, are known for their accumulative ways. In the ZAD region the term is used for those who "want the butter and what the butter cost": those productivist farmers who were already remunerated for their land in both money and alternative farmland in and outside of the ZAD during the government expropriation procedures. Without having participated at all in the battle to save the *bocage*, they insist on returning to their former holdings.

47 *Prise de terre(s)*, Notre-Dame-des-Landes, Summer 2019, p. 11.

48 Prediction by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, cited in Benjamin Kunkel, "The Capitalocene," *London Review of Books* 39, no. 5 (March 2, 2017).

49 The Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement, in an inspired appropriation, took advantage of a clause in the Brazilian constitution that allowed unused farmland to be occupied and cultivated. The Kanien'kehå-ka Native tribe of Kanehsatå:ke have an unresolved redress over the land that once encompassed the Mirabel airport that dates back to at least 1717, and presumably much earlier.

50 Silvia Pérez-Vitoria, *Manifeste pour un XXI siècle Paysan* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2015), p. 14.

51 See Ross, *Communal Luxury,* p. 141.

52 William Morris, cited in E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin Press, 1977), p. xxx.

53 *Prise de terre(s),* pp. 46–7.

54 Arthur Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune de Paris* (Lyon: Editions Jacques-Marie Laffont, [1878] 1981), p. 290.

55 See Ross, *Communal Luxury,* pp. 124–8.

56 Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 91–2. See his extended discussion of the Communards' reconfiguration of property relations, pp. 91–7.

57 Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 295.

CONCLUSION

1 See Raymond Williams, *People of the Black Mountains: The Beginning* (New York: Random House, 1989) and *People of the Black Mountains: The Eggs of the Eagle* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

2 See especially André Gorz, *Ecologica* (Paris: Galilée, 2008) and *Leur écologie et la notre* (Paris: Seuil, 2020).

3 Elisée Reclus, "Anarchy: By an Anarchist," *Contemporary Review* 45 (January-June 1884), p. 637.

4 Personal correspondence, July 9, 2021.

AFTERWORD

1 For an account of the anti-méga-bassine movement and the battle at Saint-Soline, see Kristin Ross, "The War of the Worlds in France," *New York Review of Books* (August 13, 2023).

2 See Nicolas Truong, "Les Soulèvements de la Terre: aux racines idéologiques du movement," *Le Monde* (April 21, 2023).

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